EARLY OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVES.

THIRTY-SIX LESSONS

FOR

TEACHERS AND ADVANCED CLASSES.

BY

W. HANSON PULSFORD.

ELEVENTH EDITION.

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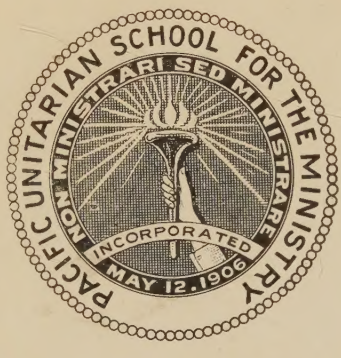

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PREFACE.

The plan of this course of Advanced Lessons was determined by Mrs. Jaynes's most excellent Old Testament Lessons for Primary Classes. While some such conformity was absolutely essential to a uniform graded scheme, it has of course entailed certain shortcomings in matters of arrangement and scope which could only have been avoided by an independent treatment of the subject. The following list of books of reference may prove useful: On the whole subject, "The Bible for Learners" is, perhaps, the best. On the origin of the various elements which are combined in the Old Testament stories, Bissell's "Genesis in Colors," Bacon's "Genesis of Genesis," and "Exodus," and Addis's reprint of JE in "The Documents the of Hexateuch" will be found invaluable. The articles "Bible," "Pentateuch," and "Israel" in the "Encyclopædia Britannica" are, of course, standard authorities.

W. H. P.

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LESSON I.

THE STORY OF THE CREATION.

(Genesis, chapters i., ii., iii.)

LESSON TEXT.— "The invisible things of God . . . are clearly seen . . . through the things that are made."— ROM. i. 20.

STUDY SPECIALLY the story in Gen. ii. 4–25 and compare it with the account in Gen. i. 1–ii. 3.

I. ORIGIN OF THE STORIES.

The first six books of the Bible are made up of two distinct histories, a portion from one of which follows or is even interwoven with a portion from the other. This was the work of a compiler who attempted to combine previous accounts into one whole. The *first* of the stories before us was the opening chapter of the *later* of those two histories, written less than five hundred years before the time of Christ. The *second* was the opening chapter of the *earlier*, which was written nearly as far back as the time of Solomon. The first chapter of Genesis was thus written probably more than four hundred years after the second.

II. THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEM.

1. The story in chapter one is carefully and systematically arranged. The second account, while more full of color and life, is without careful arrangement.

2. The style of the first is reverent and dignified. That of the second is easy and familiar.

3. The careful paragraphs of chapter one, each beginning and ending with a set phrase, and the final statement as to the origin of the Sabbath, find no parallel in the less formal chapter two.

4. The vivid pictures of the early account (Gen. ii. 4.–25) — the making of the garden; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; man's formation from the dust; the naming of the animals; man's deep sleep and woman's being made from one of his ribs — are all utterly foreign to the later story (Gen. i. 1–ii. 3).

5. Each narrative gives us a different account not only of the mode but also of the order in which things were created.

These differences ought to make it at once impossible for any one to look on either of these pictures as an accurate account of what really took place. They are poem pictures, similar to those of other nations, which help us to understand what men thought long ago and how that thought grew.

NOTE.— For other creation stories see Clodd's "Childhood of Religions," chapter two.

III. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. The earth is thought of as a flat surface. Over it rises the firmament like a great dome or roof, above which the rain water is stored. When rain is needed it is let down by the open-

ing of some of the windows in the firmament, as we see from Gen. vii. 11. Similarly the Norsemen thought the thunder was the rolling of Odin's chariot on the floor of heaven. The lightning flash was but the brightness beyond flashing through sudden cracks in the floor where the chariot bumped.

2. The prominence given to the Sabbath in chapter one suggests a special religious motive in the writer. It is one of the indications which confirm the modern opinion that the later history to which Gen. i. is the introduction was written by one of those who in the spirit of Ezekiel brought about the elaborate ceremonial of the second temple.

3. The picture of the golden age before man fell, which the early writer (author of Gen. ii.) draws for us in the "Garden of Loveliness" (Eden), shows how, as Tennyson says,

> "The past will always win
> A glory from its being far,
> And orb into the perfect star
> We saw not when we walked therein."

The golden age of King Arthur, and much modern talk about the "good old days," illustrate the same tendency. The reverse, however, is the case. The golden age lies in the future.

4. The first story calls the deity "God." The second calls him "Jahweh God," translated "The Lord God." Jahweh was God's proper name in Israel.

IV. How we think of Creation now.

We to-day have outgrown these pictures of man's childhood. 1. We know that the earth slowly formed through countless ages. We no longer think of God as a kind of omnipotent man "creating" it long ago. He is rather to us the never-ceasing life and power and meaning of which it is the evolution. As we understand our world and learn its lessons we "think God's thoughts after him." 2. The world is the living visible speech of God. Its story is the writing in which God is being gradually revealed to us. 3. God's work is not finished, for the world is still imperfect. The perfect day, which every noble life helps to realize, has only begun to dawn. 4. But when we ask what the first beginning was we can only say with these beautiful stories that it all comes from God.

V. Questions.

1. Wherein do these stories differ with respect to: — *a.* The order of creation? *b.* The way in which they are told? *c.* The making of man and of woman? *d.* The Sabbath?
2. How did these differences arise?
3. Which story was written first? Would anything in the stories themselves suggest your answer?
4. What do you know about the "evolution" or "unfolding" of the earth?
5. Can you think of any figure which may suggest to us God's relation to the universe?
6. Has man fallen from the perfect life or is he rising toward it?
7. What was the condition of primitive man?
8. Does scientific knowledge help or hurt religious thought?

Note. — For the history of the growth and composition of the first six books of the Bible see the article "Pentateuch," in the Encyclopædia Britannica, or Canon Driver's "Introduction."

LESSON II.

CAIN AND ABEL.

(Genesis, chapter iv. 1–15.)

LESSON TEXT.— "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."— GAL. vi. 7.
READ Gen. iv. 1–15, noting specially verses 7, 8, 14, and 15.

I. ORIGIN OF THE STORY.

The use of the name Jahweh (the Lord) for God, the familiar, graphic style, and the primitive ideas of this story remind us at once of the creation story in Gen. ii. 4–25, and both belong to the earliest history book of Israel, from which so much of the book of Genesis is taken. Like the stories of creation and of the Garden of Eden, it cannot be looked upon as sober history. Its whole atmosphere is that of the primitive traditions which come down to us from the earliest times of all nations.

II. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. We cannot quite certainly say why Jahweh is represented as preferring the animal sacrifice of Abel to Cain's offering of fruits. The religion of Jahweh arose amongst the Israelites when they were roving herdsmen, and when the only possible sacrifice was a sacrifice of animals. Throughout its history Israel recognized no other kind. Possibly, also, a sacrifice of the fruits of the earth was associated by the writer with the licentious, and to him idolatrous, worship of some of the Canaanitish festivals. It seems unlikely that a distinction between the tempers in which the offerings were made was intended by the writer.

2. The Hebrew of verses 7 and 8 is untranslatable. Some early copyist has made a mistake, and those who followed him have added to it, so that the text as we have it gives us little clue to what was originally written. The original may have said something like this: (Verse 7): "If thou doest well shall thy countenance not be lifted up? If thou doest not well sin lieth in wait by the door, and to master thee is his desire; but thou shouldest rule over him." (Verse 8): "But Cain followed secretly after Abel his brother. And it came to pass," etc.

3. Note in verse 14 that the writer believes that Jahweh's presence is confined to Eden. Cain is condemned to wander where he is hid from Jahweh's face. In later times we find the thought that Jahweh's presence is limited to the promised land where his holy places are. One of the terrors of exile was that it meant departure from Jahweh's land. When our story was written men had not learned to think of God as the author of Psalm cxxxix. does. But the writer of that psalm lived long after the exile, when men like the authors of Job and the second part of Isaiah had brought in a larger and truer thought.

4. In verse 15 "set a mark upon Cain" should be "appointed a sign for Cain" (Revised Version). Jahweh has a certain power outside of Eden. The sudden snapping of a twig, the cry

of a bird, the shadow of a passing cloud, may be signs through which Jahweh could warn men to stay their hand against Cain. The writer does not seem to notice that this thought is partly inconsistent with that spoken of above in section three.

5. The story does not trouble itself to account for the existence of the other inhabitants of the earth, from whom Cain's life might be in danger.

6. In early society murder is avenged by the relatives of the murdered man under the law "a life for a life." "The avenger of blood" in Deuteronomy and Joshua marks the survival of the custom. It still exists in the Corsican "vendetta," or blood feud. The *sevenfold* vengeance, namely, that seven lives should be taken for Cain's, was looked upon as a sevenfold safeguard.

III. The Value of the Story.

What a powerful lesson it brings to us. Through the colouring of early and imperfect thought Cain lives before us as we read. He takes offence at his brother's good fortune; puts aside the promptings of better thought within him (see above II. 2); nurses his sullen anger till with bowed head he tracks Abel's footsteps; only when it is too late wakes up to find that no excuse can free him from the inexorable penalty of his sin. The lesson is written on every page of human experience. You cannot yield to sin, couching at the door, desiring to have you, and escape sin's inevitable consequences. "God is not mocked." There is no chance in God's dealings. Only thus can he teach us to rule over and master temptation.

Note.—For the suggested conflict in Cain's mind see Rom. vii. 21-23. Also in different vein Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice," Act I. Scene 2, opening lines.

IV. Questions.

1. Would the style of this story suggest to you that it was by the author of Gen. i.?
2. Are there unintelligible passages in the Bible? How might such arise?
3. What marks of an ignorant and superstitious age can you find in the story before us?
4. What great truths does it teach with respect to:—*a*. Man's conscious responsibility for sin? *b*. The result of wrong-doing? *c*. The growth of power of evil when we yield to it? (James i. 15).
5. Can you picture the conflict between right and wrong which the amended version of verse seven suggests to us?
6. Is the story true to experience?
7. Need we sin when we are tempted?

"'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus,
Another thing to fall."—"*Measure for Measure*," Act II. Scene 1.

Note.—For a fuller presentation of the story see "The Bible for Learners," vol. i. chap. iv.

LESSON III.

THE GREAT FLOOD.

(Genesis, chapters vi., vii., viii., ix. 1–19.)

LESSON TEXT.—"The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters."— PSALM xciii. 4.

READ at home the whole story, noting *the details*. Note any repetitions or discrepancies; *e.g.* compare vi. 19 with vii. 2, 3, and attend to the statements as to the duration of the flood.

I. DUAL ORIGIN OF THESE CHAPTERS.

We have seen in lesson one that there are two stories of creation, one of early date, easy, graphic, and familiar in style, the other later, more dignified, fond of detailed numerical statements, systematic. We have also two stories of the flood, distinguished from one another by these characteristic marks of style. But here the two have been combined by the compiler, who tried to make one record of the two great history books of which we heard in lesson one. Probably parts of the original stories, in particular what the earlier said about the building of the ark, have been omitted as unessential, but on the whole we can still recover the two independent and parallel accounts. Indeed, if you have carefully noted the earlier writer's use of the name Jahweh, and his simple, free, naïve style, and have contrasted it with the later writer's love of careful detail and system, and avoidance of the name Jahweh, you may separate the main portions of these stories from one another for yourselves. We shall find that the accounts, while agreeing in the main, differ greatly in style and in what they say about certain details of the story, but we shall no longer be puzzled by the repetitions and discrepancies which are a stumbling-block to any careful reader who looks upon the narrative as the work of one narrator.

NOTE.— The early story, by the author of Genesis ii. 4–25, will be found in the following verses: Chapter vii. 1-5, 7-10, 12, 16 (second half), 17, 22, 23; chapter viii. 2 (second half), 3 (first half), 6-12, 13 (second half), 20-22; chapter ix. 18-27. The remaining portions together form the account which comes to us from the hand of the later writer who wrote Genesis i.

II. WHAT FACTS UNDERLIE THE NARRATIVE?

The accounts as they stand cannot, it is evident, be taken as literally accurate. The gathering of all animals into an "ark," with sufficient food for all for a year, the resting of the ark for some seven months on the top of Ararat, over 3,000 feet above the line of perpetual snow, and other similar statements, show us at once that we have here another of the beautiful stories of man's childhood, elaborated with all the fanciful colours of primitive times. Some great rising of the rivers may have marked an epoch in early history, and gradually come to be looked upon as a world-flood which well-nigh brought about the destruction of the human race. The tradition is common to many nations, for we find it in various forms in Greece, Persia, India, and in Chaldea, where the account

is startlingly similar to that before us. The common tradition took on among the Hebrews its own peculiar form, where the flood is the work of Jahweh and the result of his repenting that he had made man.

III. Noteworthy Points.

1. In the early narrative the flood is announced seven days before its appearance; the rain is on the earth forty days and nights; the ground dries up one hundred and one days after the coming of the rain; the animals are distinguished as clean and unclean, and seven pairs of the latter are taken into the ark (vii. 4, 12, viii. 6, 10, vii. 2).

2. In the later narrative the whole story is on a vaster scale, with more exact numerical statements. The waters prevail one hundred and fifty days, and disappear two months after the tops of the mountains are seen. Two only of each kind of animal enter the ark. The whole time from the breaking up of the fountains of the great deep till Noah leaves the ark is one year and ten days (vii. 11, 24, viii. 3, 4, 5, 13, 14).

3. In vi. 1-4 the early writer has incorporated material from a yet earlier source, possibly from some primitive mythological epic of Israel. The giants, half-children of the gods, correspond to the Greek "heroes."

4. The distinction between clean and unclean animals, vii. 2, is disregarded in ix. 3. We do not know how it is that certain creatures (including hares, rabbits, eels, lobsters, oysters, swine, and horses) came to be regarded as unclean and not fit for food. Probably the law (Deut. xiv. 4-20, Levi. xi. 1-31) is only a later expression of the settled usage of the people. What is not customary comes at length to be regarded as unlawful.

5. The account of the origin and meaning of the rainbow is beautifully primitive. Men in early days explain natural phenomena by reference to imaginary causes. It is only when long ages have passed that science is born and exact causes are discovered.

IV. How we have outgrown the Thought of the Story.

1. Already, in Num. xxiii. 19, we see that a higher thought has been reached. In James i. 17 we have a still nearer approach to our thought of God as the eternal, unchanging order of the universe. All things depend on his irrevocable steadfastness.

2. Jesus teaches us in Luke xiii. 1-5 that calamities such as a flood do not come as God's punishment for sin. Only ignorant people attribute such things to the anger of God.

3. Jesus and Paul have led us to regard man as gradually realizing his nature as God's child (Matt. v. 45, 48, Acts xvii. 28). How far above the conception that God will never again curse the earth for the sake of men because they are hopelessly bad!

4. It is well to remember that the highest knowledge of God and God's ways has grown out of such primitive and ignorant ideas, and ought with wider knowledge to be growing toward still nobler things. What Paul says in 1 Cor. xiii. 11, 12 is true of the race. That is what "evolution" means.

V. Questions.

1. Can you point out the contrast between the two accounts and suggest how they arose and were put together?
2. Does this remove all difficulty which might arise from our regarding these chapters as a sober statement of fact by one writer?
3. Do you think the picture of God making the earth and pronouncing it very good, then destroying it, and finally setting the rainbow to remind him that he has vowed never to destroy it again, is a worthy one?
4. Should we rightly regard the coming of cholera (for instance) as a token of God's displeasure, or as the result of unsanitary living? How would the writers of our story have probably regarded it?
5. What does Jesus teach regarding such things? What was the lesson text last Sunday?

LESSON IV.

THE TOWER OF BABEL.

(Genesis, chapter xi. 1-9.)

LESSON TEXT.— "If this work be of men, it will be overthrown." — ACTS v. 38.
READ the prescribed passage, noting specially verses 5, 6, and 9.

I. AUTHORSHIP OF THE STORY.

Several indications show us at once that this little narrative belongs to the early history book. Not only is God called Jahweh, but he is spoken of in the same familiar way which we noticed in the Jahwistic story of creation. He comes down from heaven to see what is going on. He is afraid of what men may do if he leaves them liberty, just as the early writer pictures him in Genesis iii. 22. Man's inventions and work are evil. He is thought of here just as the author who tells us of the Fall, of the murder of Abel, of the imagination of man's heart being evil from his youth (vi. 5, 6, viii. 21), thinks of him. The later author, moreover, has, in chapter x. 5, 20, 32, told us how men gradually and naturally dispersed over the earth, in strong contrast to the tale of violent disruption which we have here. All these points show us at once that the narrative before us is another of the interesting familiar stories of the early days when thinking Israelites were beginning to ask questions and to try to find answers to them in the traditional lore which was their heritage.

II. POINTS TO BE NOTED.

1. The geographical notes of the early history should be remembered. First, Eden, then Nod, now Shinar. Shinar is the great plain of the Tigris and Euphrates valley.

2. The "slime" here spoken of is bitumen or asphalt. It is still plentiful, and used as mortar in the region spoken of. We find it, too, on the bricks of the early ruins.

3. It is not quite clear how the building of the city and tower would have prevented the dispersion which the writer dreads. Perhaps we have here again some reminiscence of the transition from nomadic to settled life.

4. Mark the "let us go down" (v. 7) and "the Lord came down" (v. 5). The writer pictures God as going about like a man. We shall find many traces of this in later lessons.

5. The Greek legend of the giants trying to scale heaven by piling Pelion and Ossa on Olympus bears an interesting resemblance to the story of the Chaldean tower.

6. Babel may mean "house of Bel." Its connection with *balal*, confusion, in verse nine, is entirely fanciful.

III. THE FACTS WHICH GAVE RISE TO THE STORY.

On two recently discovered Babylonian inscribed cylinders Nebuchadnezzar tells us that there was a vast ruined Babylonian

tower in his time. He says, "From the lapse of time it had become ruined. The rain and wet had penetrated the brickwork. The casing of burnt brick lay scattered in heaps." This tower had consisted of a platform 150 feet square, on which rose seven four-cornered stories, gradually lessening in size, and dedicated to "the seven lights of the earth," Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, the Moon. Nebuchadnezzar restored it. He says, "As it was ages before, I built it anew." Our story grew out of the tradition as to the origin of some such vast ruin. One of the legends quoted by Clodd in his "Childhood of Religions" very closely resembles our narrative. We may note that Herodotus tells us he saw at Babylon a temple of Bel which was very like the tower Nebuchadnezzar speaks of. At the present time a vast mound covering some five thousand square feet and rising to the height of three hundred, composed of the burnt brick and bitumen cement of which the tower was built, marks the site.

IV. The Origin of Languages.

Philologists explain to us that different languages may be traced back to a parent tongue from which they have gradually diverged as separate nations arose in the slow increase and diffusion of the human race. Even in so small a land as Britain we have dialects which have diverged from the parent English so as to become like new tongues. Broad Yorkshire or Lincolnshire is quite unintelligible to a stranger. Such variations have given rise in course of time to a new language, which, however, always carries marks of its descent and relationships. Whether there was only one original language, or whether language came into existence in different forms of primitive speech in different localities, no one can as yet certainly say; but Hebrew belongs to an entirely different family from the Indian and European tongues. The latter are all closely related, but between them and a Semitic tongue we can as yet discover no clear connection.

V. The Lesson we may learn.

Through all the imperfect thought of God and God's ways we may discern in germ the great lesson that in the end the fulfilment of the eternal purposes utterly overwhelms all that has seemed to stay them. For a while ignorance and cruelty and brute force may seem triumphant, but finally God triumphs. Progress and knowledge and a higher and wider life advance in spite of every barrier which has been raised against them. Only confusion results when men try to set up their own traditions against the ever-widening truth of God. Although our writer looks upon human progress as evil, he still has begun to see that God is over all and must prevail.

VI. Questions.

1. What would lead you to suppose that this story belongs to the early history book of Israel?
2. How does the author regard human progress?
3. What does Babel mean? Can it mean confusion?
4. Do we know of any huge ruins which may suggest to us how the story of the tower of Babel arose?
5. What was the origin of the diversities of language?
6. What lesson can we learn from the crude idea of this narrative?

LESSON V.

THE STORY OF ABRAHAM.—PART I.

(Genesis, chapters xi. 27–xii. 9, xiii. 2–11, xv. 4–6, xviii. 20–33, xix. 15, 16, 24–28.)

LESSON TEXT.— "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"— MICAH vi. 8.

READ at home the passages selected above. Note xii. 6, 7, 8, xiii. 4, xviii. 21, 33.

I. THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE PATRIARCHAL STORIES.

The next eight lessons are about the patriarchs, as the pre-Mosaic heroes of Hebrew tradition are called. It is now generally agreed that like other early national stories, for example, those about the founding of Rome, these are not to be taken as literal fact. The tables of relationships especially point to the relations of tribes and nations rather than to those of individuals. It is here with most of the names as it was later with Israel and Judah, which stood not for single men but for the northern and southern kingdoms respectively. A story which tells us how God came to Abraham's tent and ate there and talked with Abraham, and afterward went his way (xviii. 1, 8, 13, 22, 33), is evidently the imaginative thought of ignorant men about times long past. We shall find as we read that these narratives tell us in the main three things, viz.: 1. What the Israelites at the time of the early monarchy thought about the relationships and relative importance of the nations about them. 2. The explanations they gave of the origin of the sanctuaries of Jahweh where alone it was in those days lawful to worship (Shechem, xii. 6, Bethel, xii. 8, Hebron, xiii. 18, for example). 3. The ideal characters which men used to picture as pleasing to Jahweh.

II. DATE AND AUTHORSHIP OF THE STORIES.

Nearly all the patriarchal history, as we have it, is drawn from the history book which dates from the time of the early monarchy. Chapters xvii. and xxiii., with the first nine verses of chapter xxviii., are the main exceptions. They belong to the later writer from whom we have the first chapter of Genesis. We shall, however, find traces which lead us to recognize alongside the material of the writer who uses "Jahweh" for God a great deal by another who belongs to the same period and uses the name "Elohim." But as both these writers belong to one time, and as their combined work makes up the early history book, it is not important for us to distinguish between them. What we have to remember is that these graphic tales of early times and forefathers come to us from the days and reflect to us the spirit of the times before Jerusalem became the only place where men could lawfully sacrifice to Jahweh.

III. THE NARRATIVES IN THIS LESSON.

1. Abraham and Lot, in obedience to Jahweh, come from Chaldea to Palestine (xi. 27–xii. 9).

2. They agree to separate. Lot settles in the cities of the plain of Jordan (xiii. 2–11).

3. Abraham pleads with God not to destroy the cities (xviii. 20–33).

4. Jahweh rescues Lot. The cities are destroyed. Lot's wife is turned into a pillar of salt (xix. 15, 16, 24–28).

5. Jahweh promises Abraham a nation of descendants numerous as the stars in the sky (xv. 4–6).

IV. Points to be noted in each Story.

1. Mark how xii. 6, 7, 8 tells us the reason why in the time of the writer Bethel and Shechem were recognized sanctuaries. Not until the time of Josiah were Jahweh's national sanctuaries abolished in favor of Jerusalem. The Books of Samuel and Amos bear this fact on almost every page.

2. *a.* The attitude which Abraham takes toward Lot in verses nine and ten is noteworthy. The people amongst whom such a narrative arises are evidently beginning to realize the meaning which our lesson text enforces. Religion is not merely sacrifice: it is a righteous and merciful temper as well. *b.* Early tradition seems to point to the fact that long ago the volcanic depression where the Dead Sea now is had not appeared.

3. How primitive and yet how splendid this picture is. The writer thinks of God as walking about on the earth, as eating, as requiring to go down to Sodom to see how things really are, as going on his way when his conversation with Abraham is over. Alongside this ignorant thought of God how noble is the unselfish humanity of Abraham.

4. The story of the destruction of the cities *may* go back to some reminiscence of volcanic disturbance. Some pillar of basalt by the Dead Sea evidently gave rise to the legend of Lot's wife. One is still pointed out by the Palestine guides. Similar stories are often fancifully connected with strange and outstanding landmarks even in modern times.

5. In this promise we can read the national hope in the early days of Israel. They believed they were to become a vast world-power. It took long ages of oppression to prove that Israel is one of the small nations of the earth, and that her power lies not in her numbers nor in the extent of her empire, but in the incomparable moral worth of her religion.

V. Questions.

1. Do these stories impress you as being what men imagined long ago about far-off days, or as a record of actual fact?
2. What do the narratives tell us about the writer's own time?
3. Had Jahweh many sanctuaries in early Israel? Name some.
4. Did the early history book come from more than one hand? What reason can you give for your answer?
5. What is fine in the religion of Abraham?
6. Does national greatness depend upon numbers or extent of territory? Upon what does it depend? Were the Greeks a great nation? Why?

LESSON VI.

THE STORY OF ABRAHAM.—PART II.

(Genesis, chapters xvi. 1, 3, 15, xviii. 1-15, xxi. 8-21.)

LESSON TEXT.—"We are not children of a handmaid, but of the free woman. . . . Stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage."—GALATIANS iv. 31, v. 1.

READ the three passages assigned, noting any differences of style which might suggest to you the authorship. Observe also xxi. 15.

I. OUTLINE OF THE STORIES IN TO-DAY'S LESSON.

1. Abraham takes Hagar (Sarah's servant) as his second wife, and Ishmael is born (xvi. 1, 3, 15).

2. Jahweh and two angels come to tell Abraham that Sarah is to have a son, so that the slave's child may not be his heir (xviii. 1–15).

3. Sarah, when Isaac is between two and three years old persuades Abraham to send away Hagar and Ishmael. God cares for them in the wilderness, and Ishmael becomes the ancestor of the Ishmaelites (xxi. 8–21).

II. AUTHORSHIP OF THESE PASSAGES.

We saw in the last lesson that the graphic, picturesque, life-like stories with which we are dealing come from the early history book. Parts of that book were written by an author who uses "Jahweh" (the Lord) for God, and parts by one who uses "Elohim" (God). For convenience these authors are called Jahwist and Elohist, or J and E respectively, and their combined history is known as JE, as distinguished from the work of the later historian who wrote under the influence of the priestly ideas of the later temple, and is called P. In these patriarchal stories the vivid narratives come from JE, and the formal bare outline of facts from P (note the exceptions named in last lesson). These facts at once guide us to the following results: Our first passage (xvi. 1, 3, 15) is a bare outline of what the rest of the chapter gives in detail. It belongs to the late priestly record, P. The second passage is very bright and graphic, and uses "Jahweh" (Lord) for God. It is part of J's work from the early history book. The third passage (xxi. 8–21) is evidently one of the bright early stories from JE, and the use of "Elohim" (God) for the deity tells us that it belongs to that portion of the early records which was written by E. We have thus in the lesson before us clearly marked samples of the work of each of the early writers and also of the later. Of course the characteristics I have given are those only which are obvious to those who do not know Hebrew. To a Hebraist there are marked peculiarities of diction, etc., which make the distinction more clear.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN EACH.

1. Mark that these verses are a bare outline of events. They tell us that it was believed that the Hebrews and the Ishmaelites

were kindred, but gives an inferior position to the latter as deriving them from a slave's child. The Ishmaelites were the Bedouin Arabs, who lived as roving herdsmen in the barren land between Palestine and the Euphrates.

2. Note in verse three the marginal reading of the revised version, "and he ran to meet them . . . and bowed himself and said, O Lord," etc. In verse thirteen we read, "and Jahweh said," etc. These passages show that the three men of the story are supposed by the writer to be Jahweh and two angels. Nearly all early thought of God pictures him as in the form of man. Anthropomorphism is the term we use for this. When men today talk of God familiarly as if he were a kind of magnified, nonnatural man, they are guilty of anthropomorphism, though not in so crude a way as our writer is. The character of Sarah is not a prepossessing one. Her incredulity and untruthfulness help to make us feel that the characters in these early pictures are alive.

3. *a.* We have Elohim (God) for Jahweh (the Lord) all through this passage, the first instance of E's work which we have studied. *b.* In verse nine, "mocking" should be "playing." The offence lies wholly in Sarah's bitter and jealous imagination. *c.* The impression we have in verse fifteen and throughout the story is that Ishmael was a mere child. This was probably the idea of the writer. The later P, on the other hand, in his outline makes Ishmael a young man. In xvi. 16, xxi. 5, he tells us Ishmael was fourteen years old when Isaac was born. He was not cast out till Isaac was weaned (xxi. 8), probably two and a half years later. *d.* Sarah comes before us in a still more unfavorable light. The whole picture helps to illustrate the bitternesses which arise under the polygamous relationships which were habitual in early Israel. How lifelike the whole picture is. Note the little detailed touches to which this unconscious realism is due.

IV. What we may learn from these Character Portraits.

1. To admire the simple, dignified courtesy of Abraham. It is still found among the "sons of the desert." Their untutored gentlemanliness leads them to treat strangers still much as Abraham treated the three men in our story. As Tennyson makes Guinevere say,

> "Manners are not idle, but the fruit
> Of loyal nature and of noble mind."

2. To beware of the selfish, jealous nature which leads to cruelty and is here so naturally akin to deceit.

3. To understand Paul's use of our story. There are children of the bondwoman and children of the free in religion. Religion from without is a slavery. He is the true child of God who knows the religion from within whereby Christ has set us free. Quote lesson text.

V. Questions.

1. Distinguish between J, E, and P.
2. What is anthropomorphism?
3. What did the Hebrews think about their relation to the Arab tribes to the east of Palestine?
4. Is vivid imaginative color usually a sign of early date?
5. Point to some good and some bad qualities in the characters before us.

LESSON VII.

THE STORY OF ABRAHAM.—PART III.

(Genesis, chapter xxii. 1-13.)

Lesson Text.—"I desire mercy (kindness), and not sacrifice."—Hosea vi. 6.

Read chapters xxii. 1-13 attentively, watching for indications of authorship; note verse 12. Read also Micah vi. 6, 7, Isaiah i. 10-17.

I. Purpose of the Narrative.

The early writer (Elohist) from whose hand this story comes, while fully acknowledging that Jahweh demands and is pleased by sacrifices, and admitting that he might order the sacrifice of Isaac, yet wishes to make clear that such a command came as a trial of faith, and that instead of the first-born God accepts the sacrifice of a ram. The story points to the fact that human sacrifices, even to Jahweh, had taken place; but also to the fact that a higher spirit of worship, to which such a thing was abhorrent, had become prevalent. The tender beauty of our story is a protest against the old and savage rite.

II. Human Sacrifices.

It is hard to believe that a religion which rose to such splendid moral heights as the religion of Israel should ever have had its roots in superstition and cruelty base enough to have made human sacrifice possible. Yet such seems to have been the case. In other religions it was not unknown. The Greek sacrifice of Iphigenia is familiar. It was a custom in early Israel to cause men and women to "pass through the fire" as a religious rite borrowed from the Canaanites. Ahaz and Manasseh each did so (2 Kings xvi. 3, xxi. 6). The practice was only put an end to under Josiah (2 Kings xxiii. 10). And we know that acts of incredible cruelty were constantly done under what men considered the express orders of Jahweh. In 1 Samuel xv. 3 we read how Jahweh ordered Saul to "slay both man and woman, infant and suckling," and we read in 1 Samuel xv. 33 how Samuel, Jahweh's prophet, "hewed Agag in pieces before Jahweh." David's fearful treatment of the people of Rabbah passes without a word of censure (2 Samuel xii. 31). In Micah vi. 6, 7 the prophet says all sacrifice is useless, even that of the first-born, a passage which would be meaningless if people had not been in the habit of thinking that they might give their first-born for their transgression. And we know how Jephthah vowed (Judges xi. 31), "Whosoever cometh forth to meet me . . . shall surely be Jahweh's, and I will offer him up for a burnt offering" (Revised Version, margin). And in verse 39 we read, "and he did with her according to the vow that he had vowed." These are some of the reasons which have compelled modern authorities to come to the conclusion that our story finds a deeper force from referring to that which was not unknown in the fierce, half-savage worship of early Israel.

III. The False Principle of Sacrifice.

The root of the whole matter lies in the false idea common to all early forms of religion, that the deity, like an angry foe, may be propitiated by sacrifice, the value to the giver of that which is offered being, moreover, the standard of efficacy toward propitiation. It was this idea which has led men sometimes to sacrifice even their best beloved, and has since vitiated higher forms of religion. Even Christian theologians have represented the "just anger" of God as appeased by the "sacrifice" of Jesus on the cross. All the sacerdotal side of Israel's religion, centering in the elaborate temple ritual, rests upon the idea that the offering of sacrifices atones for sin. In our own time we still find a lingering feeling that what is specially disagreeable in religion is specially meritorious. The whole of this is a relic of the false and cruel notion of the deity which pictures him as an angry and barbarous man, to be appeased by offerings and the shedding of blood.

All through the history of Israel, the prophets, to whom the highest developments of Hebrew religion are due, protested, though well-nigh in vain, against this false and dishonoring doctrine. What can be stronger than Isaiah's words in the opening chapter of his book (i. 10–17), or than the words of Micah to which we have referred (Micah vi. 6, 7), or than Amos v. 21–24. These are only samples of the noble truth so vehemently taught by all these heroic preachers that sacrifice is of no avail. Righteousness and mercy and truth are what Jahweh demands. In this lies the value of Israel's religion. Her sacrificial ideas in the hands of the priesthood have been her continual bane. Quote the lesson text.

IV. Is there a True Idea of Sacrifice?

When we make it figurative there is. 1. Love of God means "crucifying the flesh" to Paul. He has been "put to death" with Christ. If we would know our own noblest we must "rise on stepping stones of our dead selves to higher things." We must deny ourselves many a pleasant indulgence when indulgence is wrong. 2. To do right too often means sacrifice. Dishonesty, compromise, ignoble silence often are an easy way to success. But a true man will sacrifice success rather than sully his sense of honor and debase his soul.

Both of these ideas, however, are wholly different from the original thought of sacrifice as that which was offered to propitiate or appease an offended God. That thought and all its modern equivalents are a degrading relic of barbaric religion utterly unworthy of any true conception of "Our Father."

V. Questions.

1. Was human sacrifice believed to be pleasing to the gods in early religions? Give an instance.
2. What reasons are there for believing that this was so in early Israel?
3. What does our story suggest?
4. Is it true that sacrifice ever appeases God or takes away guilt?
5. What do the prophets teach?
6. Is there another sense in which sacrifice is an inevitable result of obedience to God?

LESSON VIII.

ISAAC AND REBEKAH.

(Genesis, chapter xxiv.)

LESSON TEXT.—"Well done, thou good and faithful servant."—MATT. XXV. 21.
READ chapters xv. 2, 3, xxiv. 34–67; note xxiv. 2, 6, 10, 30, 43, 44, 53, 55.

I. THE "FAITHFUL AND WISE SERVANT."

Although the main purpose of this beautiful idyl by the early writer who uses the name Jahweh (see lesson vi., paragraph ii.) is to emphasise the fact that there was no Canaanitish blood in the Hebrew stock, the point which most strikes us is the ideal picture of the noble servant of Abraham. In chapter xv. 2, 3, we learn that he was born in Abraham's house, and was at first looked upon as his heir. The birth of Isaac destroyed all such hopes; and yet in the story before us we find him no less intent to serve the best interests of his master and his master's son. What a mark of zeal we have in verse thirty-three! He was Abraham's slave and yet "the elder of his house that ruled over all that he had." One of the fine traits of Hebrew life is that slaves amongst them were generally free from the degradation which slavery so often brings. They were rather members of their master's household, and their interests were closely identified with his. Only where such relationships are common could a picture such as that of Eliezer arise. Our story throws much light upon the beauty of the domestic relations in the best period of Israel's life. In picturing the past the writer unconsciously reveals to us the conditions which belong to his own time.

II. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. Verses six and thirty-seven strongly express the thought which underlay all Hebrew religion, that only the descendants of the Abrahamic family are the chosen people of God. Ishmael does not belong to it, for his mother was an Egyptian. Isaac must not marry a Canaanite lest that should invalidate the claims of his children. In a future lesson we shall see how the same is thought to be true about Esau. One of the distinguishing marks of Christianity, and especially of the work of Paul, is that it abolishes entirely this dishonouring conception of God. In John x. 16, we read, "Other sheep have I which are not of this fold," and in Matt. viii. 11, "Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down . . . in the kingdom of heaven," while Paul writes, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Rom. viii. 14). Religion is not a matter of race, but of character and conduct.

2. Refer to the map for the relative positions of Egypt, Palestine, and Mesopotamia, or, as the Hebrew says, "the land of the two rivers" (the Tigris and Euphrates are of course referred to). Eliezer would have to go northward along the coast and then eastward and southward through the site of Damascus to

Mesopotamia. It was impossible to cross the desert directly to the east of the Holy Land, so that Palestine became the only highway between the great nation of the Nile valley and those in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates. This, of course, gave her, as a frontier state between two great world powers, a certain importance, but also rendered her ultimate loss of any independence inevitable. It was under these political conditions that the great prophets Amos, Isaiah of Jerusalem, and Jeremiah wrote.

3. Although women in these Old Testament stories occupy what seems to us a menial position, and do rough work, such as watering the cattle, their status as a whole is remarkable for such early days. We shall see later what an important part they sometimes played in the early history of the nation. Nevertheless Rebekah has no choice in the matter of her marriage, and, as we see in verse fifty-three, is practically bought from Laban and her mother. The alternatives proposed to her in verse fifty-eight are merely whether she prefers to go with Eliezer at once or after a ten days' sojourn at home.

4. It is remarkable how unimportant a place Bethuel plays in the narrative. Rebekah's mother and brother Laban carry on all the negotiations. It is Laban who asks Eliezer to come in, and in verses fifty-three, fifty-five, fifty-eight Laban, not Bethuel, is referred to. The opinion of some authorities that Bethuel's name in verse fifty is a later insertion strengthens this impression.

5. The effect of the ring and bracelets upon Laban in verse thirty agrees thoroughly with all that we elsewhere learn of his character. His crafty, unscrupulous disposition was certainly not without parallel in the national life amid which the story arose.

6. The belief in signs meets us again in this story. Eliezer, in verses fourteen, forty-three, forty-four, agrees with Jahweh as to the sign by which he shall know the maiden. Traces of this superstition still linger on amongst uneducated people in our own time. You have doubtless heard of persons opening the Bible at random for guidance in some decision. The belief in "special providences" belongs to the same category.

7. Note, that of the three, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Isaac is by far the least prominent, not only in these early narratives, but throughout the Old Testament. The reason of this is probably that in Israel's later history the "sons of Isaac" were the people of the south country, who were comparatively unimportant. It is interesting that Amos, who himself belonged to the south, is the only prophet who gives special place to Isaac (Amos i. 1, vii. 9, 15).

8. Another mark of early date is the thought that an angel is to guide Eliezer. The belief in angels and demons as special supernatural powers influencing men's life gradually grows weak as men come to trust the unchanging ways of God.

III. Questions.

1. Were the Hebrews slaveholders?
2. Who was Eliezer? Tell what you know of his history.
3. How closely were Isaac and Rebekah related?
4. What do you think of Laban?
5. By what route did Rebekah come to Palestine? Was there any other? What bearing had this on the national history of Israel?
6. Why did those who told these stories picture Abraham as sending to Mesopotamia for a wife for Isaac? Give other instances of similar conduct.
7. Is religion independent of race?

LESSON IX.

JACOB AND ESAU.

(Genesis, chapters xxv. 27-34, xxvii.)

LESSON TEXT.—"He that loveth not his brother . . . cannot love God."—1 JOHN iv. 20.

READ the prescribed passages, noting that xxvii. 11–13, 16, 18, 19, 21–23 form an independent episode, referring to the placing of the skin upon Jacob's hands and neck.

I. THE SOURCES OF THE STORY.

We should at once infer from the whole nature of the narrative that it is from the early history book, JE, which in its turn was compiled from the work of the Jahwist and that of the Elohist. Scholars find from distinctive marks of Hebrew style that while the main story in chapter twenty-seven is from the hand of J, the passages referred to above are borrowed from E. J pictures Isaac as having his doubts set at rest by the smell of Esau's garment which Jacob had donned (vs. 15 and 27). The further trait of Jacob's feigning the hairy hands and neck of Esau, which seems to us somewhat improbable, is borrowed from E's version of the story. It is interesting to note that these early narratives were current in slightly different forms as they were handed down from generation to generation in the days of Israel's childhood.

II. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. Mark the character of Rebekah. How unlike the ideal woman some of us have thought of as brought from Mesopotamia by Eliezer. Note the family resemblance to Laban; also, that Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes, is portrayed rather as a passive tool in her hands than as taking the initiative.

2. In chapter xxv. 27–34, moreover, we have a partial excuse for Jacob. His deception of Isaac was only an endeavour to obtain the blessing which ought to go with the birthright which Esau had already sold to him. How utterly despicable his conduct is, nevertheless, as he takes advantage of his starving brother. Jacob is of the same timid, intriguing, unscrupulously crafty type as Rebekah and Laban. In many ways how truly this pictures the meaner side of Jewish life. Alongside the noble inheritance which their psalmists and prophets have given to us there has too often lain the Jacob nature which lives in the story before us.

3. The birthright was the privileged position of the firstborn. Esau is the older. But Jacob, in winning the birthright, gains the place in the favour of Jehovah which belonged to the eldest son. The narrator wishes to explain that the Edomites of Mount Seir, the descendants of Esau, are older than the Israelites, but that the "sons of Jacob" are the chosen race, and carry the rights of the firstborn. The suggestion that the bargain over the mess of pottage (red lentils) could impel Jahweh to act toward Jacob as he otherwise would have done toward Esau, and thus to alter the whole destiny of nations, is very primitive.

4. Note the power which the "blessing" carries with it. Jacob having pronounced it has no power to recall or cancel. Once spoken, the fulfilment is inevitable (v. 37). Willing as the old man is to do what he can for the son he loved, the best that he can bestow sounds like a curse. The fear of a curse and of "the evil eye" has lingered on into comparatively recent times. It corresponds exactly with this belief that a blessing in certain hands can alter the ways and attitude of God. Verse forty is a statement of the relations of Israel to the Edomites in the times of the writer, which Isaac's words are supposed to have brought about.

5. How we are drawn toward Esau, and how mistaken those are who try to set him over against Jacob as a type of badness. He is frank, fearless, outspoken, incapable of deceit, deeply fond of his old father (read his touching appeal in v. 34), and, as we shall see in lesson xi., wonderfully generous toward the brother who robbed him of blessing and birthright alike. It is, however, only too true that craft and intrigue like that of Jacob often do supplant in the race for outer prosperity the more honest Esau. But which would you choose to resemble? Which nature really has the best of it in the end?

NOTE.—Read the paragraph at the very end of "Romola" beginning, "That is not easy." It is by far the finest modern restatement of the questions just suggested.

6. In xxvii. 45 we have fear of Esau's anger assigned by the early narrator as the reason why Jacob goes to Padan-aram. The writer who dates from the end of the exile, P, gives us another reason. Jacob is sent away by his father lest, following Esau's example, he should take a wife from among the daughters of Heth (xxvi. 34, xxviii. 1). Compare this with the attitude of Abraham toward Isaac's marriage in last lesson (read xxiv. 3–4).

III. QUESTIONS.

1. Was Jacob or Esau the elder?
2. Is the idea of "birthright," that the eldest son should have special privileges, a just one?
3. Have "blessings" or "curses" any real power in themselves to further or to thwart prosperity?
4. Can anything of this kind alter God's just attitude toward all his children?
5. Do you think that the people amongst whom these stories arose had a high moral standard?
6. What do you think of Esau? of Jacob? of Rebekah? of Isaac?
7. Is more than one reason assigned for Jacob's leaving home? If so, what were they?
8. What does the story tell us about Israel and Edom?
9. Can a man pay too much for success? In what way? What does George Eliot say about it? Do you think it is true?

NOTE.—Bacon's "Genesis of Genesis," Part III., prints J, E, and P separately. To read them in that form brings out their characteristics very strongly.

LESSON X.

JACOB AND RACHEL.

(Genesis, chapters xxviii. 10–22, xxix. 1–30, xxxv. 23–29)

LESSON TEXT.—"This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." GEN. xxviii. 17.

READ the passages prescribed, noting the use of Jahweh (the Lord) and Elohim (God) in chapter xxviii. Compare it also with xxxv. 9–15. Note the general resemblance between the story of Rachel and that of Rebekah.

I. THE NARRATIVES.

1. The two early accounts (J and E) of how Bethel came to be one of God's sacred places (xxviii. 10–22).
2. How Jacob married Leah and Rachel and served Laban fourteen years (xxix. 1–30).
3. The relative importance of the twelve tribes (xxxv. 23–29).

II. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN EACH.

I. *In xxviii. 10–22.*—1. We have here a narrative put together, as the story of the flood was, from two different accounts. In the narrative of the flood we had an early story and a late one pieced together (J and P). Here the narrative is combined from the parallel accounts of the two early writers, J and E. Verses 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19 are J's version, and when read together form a complete narrative. (In verse 13 read as in margin of Revised Version.) So verses 11, 12, 17, 18, 20–22 read together give us E's account of the origin of Bethel's sanctity. You see that the reference to Jacob's ladder belongs to E alone. In J, Jahweh merely comes to Jacob at Bethel and renews the promise made to Abraham. 2. E tells us how the sacred stone at Bethel was set up by Jacob. Sacred stones are common in many early religions, and the Israelites probably found a sacred stone at Bethel. It was impossible to outroot the belief in these old traditions of sacred places and stones; and such stories as this show how instead popular tradition came to connect them with patriarchal times. It was in this manner also that Yule logs and Easter eggs came to be connected with, or rather absorbed into, the Christian celebrations of Christmas and Easter. The old midwinter festival became that of Christ's birth. The old spring festival took new form as Easter or Whitsunday. So the old sanctuaries and holy places of Palestine came to be associated with patriarchal times, and were made sacred to Jahweh while bearing still in many ways traces of a heathen or non-Israelitish origin. 3. Note the curious bargain Jacob makes in verses 20–22. If God blesses him, he in turn will give God tithes. 4. The whole atmosphere of both accounts is very primitive. The ladder by which God's angels pass from heaven to earth bears, like the rainbow story, all the marks of early legend; for though the writer makes Jacob see it in his sleep, he does not in any way cause us to feel that the thought is unreal to him. 5. Note in both accounts (vs. 16 and 17) that God is present only

in certain "holy places." Our thought that God is in and through and over all is quite foreign to the writers. 6. In xxxv. 15 we have P's account of the naming of Bethel.

II. *In xxix. 1–30.*—1. Note in verse 8 that it requires the united strength of all the shepherds to move the stone which Jacob rolls away with apparent ease. 2. The verses in which Laban cheats Jacob into marrying Leah belong to E. The story J gives us merely makes Laban insist that Jacob shall marry Leah first. 3. The ordinary impression that Jacob waited fourteen years before marrying Rachel rests on a misapprehension. The story says that at the end of seven years Jacob married Leah, and then, after the week's festivities were over, married Rachel on the understanding that he serve Laban seven years longer. It was not till the exile that men came to look upon the marriage of two sisters to one man as a bad thing. It was then that a man was forbidden, so long as his wife was alive, to marry her sister.

III. *In xxxv. 23–29.*—1. This little list is but a summary from the late history book. It has said nothing at all to us about Jacob's cheating Esau, or Laban's cheating Jacob, or Jacob's sharp practice with Laban. 2. The meaning of the list, as we see from the other accounts, is to indicate what people believed about the seniority and importance of the tribes. Joseph and Benjamin are not the senior tribes, but are the sons of the favorite wife. Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher are not looked upon as of perfectly pure blood. They are the sons of the handmaids only. 3. Contrast the style of this little section with the free and easy narrative we have been reading.

III. What we may learn from the Narratives.

1. To thoroughly dislike and despise conduct such as that of Jacob and Laban. Israel soon outgrew the low moral standard of these stories. Amos, writing half a century later, is quite explicit on this point (quote lesson text); and, as we saw in lesson five (quote lesson text), Micah, writing not very long after, is equally clear. The great work of the prophets was to establish the religion of Jahweh as the religion of righteous dealing.

2. To mark that in the days of man's ignorance alone is God thought of as near to men only in a holy place or on a holy day. The religion of Israel did not till after the captivity quite shake herself free of this thought. But at her highest point, in the book of Job and in the second half of Isaiah and some of the finest of the later psalms, we find that God is ever near, and that religion needs no sacred place or time. Yet in spite of it all some people today think that ground can be "consecrated."

3. To see more clearly how the Bible grew from primitive beginnings toward higher things. It is but the record of how ignorance and superstition, and what to us seems wrong and even idolatrous, were the dark soil out of which God was to bring the fair blossom and fruit of nobler things. Do not forget that all fruit is seed.

IV. Questions.

1. How did Bethel get its name? How many accounts have we? Which is the prettiest?
2. How could a sacred stone become associated with the pure worship of Jahweh? How did we come to have Easter eggs?
3. Is God's presence confined to localities? How about consecrated ground, or a consecrated building?
4. How do you explain the existence in the Bible of accounts which do not agree with one another?
5. Did the prophets of the eighth century before Christ (Amos and Isaiah i.–xl. *e.g.*) approve of conduct like that of Jacob and Laban? Does the writer of the late history book tell any such narratives about the father of the twelve tribes?
6. What would the continual growth of religion and morality out of superstition and ignorance lead us to infer as regards the future?

LESSON XI.

THE MEETING OF JACOB AND ESAU.

(Genesis, chapters xxxi. 1-3, 17-21, xxxii. 3-6, xxxiii. 1-20, xxxii. 24-32.)

LESSON TEXT.—"The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous is as bold as a lion."—PROVERBS xxviii. 1.

READ the prescribed passages, noting the different reasons in xxxi. 1-3, also the note about Isaac in xxxi. 18. Mark xxxi. 19.

I. THE NARRATIVES.

1. How Jacob, having grown wealthy by guile, left Laban secretly, and how Rachel stole the teraphim (xxxi. 1-3, 17-21).

2. Jacob's fear of Esau, and Esau's generous forgiveness (xxxii. 3-6, xxxiii. 1-20).

3. How Jacob wrestled with God (xxxii. 24-32).

II. NOTEWORTHY POINTS IN EACH.

I. *In xxxi. 1-3, 17-21.*—1. Jacob is represented in chapter xxx. as managing by trickery to increase the number of speckled and spotted among the flocks because, by agreement, these were to fall to his share. In xxxi. 7, 8, we have another version of the story. By noticing how God is named in these chapters you may find the solution of the difficulty. Chapter xxx. is the tradition which J has preserved for us. Chapter xxxi. gives us the form in which E knew it. 2. Verse eighteen is from the work of the late historian, P. He believes Isaac to have lived till after Jacob's return with his twelve sons to Palestine. To J and E, on the other hand, the scene where Isaac blesses Jacob and Esau is one by the deathbed of the patriarch (xxxv. 29, xxvii. 2, 10, 41). 3. The "images," or "teraphim," which Rachel stole were Laban's household gods, idols we should call them. They were very common in early Israel, and were used mainly in attempts to foretell the future. In 1 Sam. xix. 13, 16, Michal, David's wife, puts the household god, or teraph, in the bed, that his pursuers may mistake it for David. In Judges xvii. 5, we find teraphim in connection with an ephod, both evidently used as instruments of religious observance. These and many other indications show us clearly that in early days even the religion of Jahweh was not without its idolatrous and superstitious side. The incident in our story may be the account given in the eighth century of the introduction of teraphim into Israel. Mark that although God comes to Laban (v. 24) just as he does to Jacob (v. 11), yet Laban calls the teraphim which Rachel hid in the camel's saddle "gods," in verse thirty, and in verse thirty-two Jacob seems thoroughly to share Rachel's and Laban's sense of their importance.

II. *In xxxii. 3-6, xxxiii. 1-20.*—1. In xxxiii. 11 we see that the writer allows Jacob to speak of the prosperity which he had won by craftiness as the gracious dealing of God. Piety of speech and unscrupulous dealing do not go well together. But in those days, and much later, as we see clearly from the Book of Job, out-

ward prosperity was looked upon as a special mark of God's good pleasure. As a matter of fact, it is frequently the reward of conduct just like that of Jacob and Laban. Jesus does not regard wealth as the necessary result of goodness or even as a sign of it. 2. Mark how these narratives link familiar places in Palestine to patriarchal times: Bethel, Gilead, Succoth, Shechem, and in the next section Penuel, are all so treated in the passages before us.

III. *In xxxii. 24–32.*— 1. The "man" of verse twenty-four is seen to be Jahweh, from verses twenty-eight and thirty. Hosea, too, says (xii. 3) Jacob "by his strength strove with God," although he immediately afterwards speaks of "the angel." 2. Although Jacob's name is now changed to Israel, we find that even J, who gives us the story, does not at once respect the change, while E holds steadily to the name Jacob, and has no knowledge of the story of the wrestling or of the changed name. 3. The Hebrew for wrestled, *jeabeq,* appears to be a suggested derivation for Jabboq. 4. The reference in verse thirty-two to abstinence from the "sinew of the hip which is upon the hollow of the thigh" is mysterious. We have no other reference to it, and it is not easy to see what part of any animal is referred to. Many authorities look upon the verse as a later addition to the narrative.

III. What we may learn from the Narratives.

1. The main lesson is, that even so grand a religion as that of Israel has, like all other religions, its roots in the grossest superstition. We saw something of this in the lesson on Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac. Here in the story of the wrestling (which is in no sense metaphorical) we have another glimpse of the early idea of God. His worship, moreover, is closely linked with the use of "images" and sacred stones and holy places. These facts are clear to us in these early stories although it would seem from the work of P that in later Israel the attempt was made to separate all this from the religion of Jahweh and to brand it as a forsaking of him. The truth is that the early Jahweh worship was gross and crude and superstitious, and only rose after long ages to such sublime heights as we find in the greatest of the prophets.

2. We should learn to admire and emulate the generous conduct of Esau. He is the same rough, free, impulsive, good-hearted fellow we knew in the earlier stories. The father of the twelve tribes comes out badly in the comparison. It is well that the great religious teachers, of whom Amos is the first, stand out so strongly against the influence for evil which these early pictures must have exercised. That nation is indeed badly off which adores outer success and the craft which wins it and links both with professions of piety. Esau gives us a nobler ideal.

3. Let the story of the wrestling warn us from thinking of God as if he were a man, and forgetting that God as he is is too vast for our comprehension. A good deal in certain forms of modern religious thought and worship is full of the easy familiarity which destroys reverence and lowers the whole tone of the religious life. What about prayers with respect to the weather, for instance? or some of the hymns used at revivals? We should never forget that God is he whom we should worship "with reverence and godly fear."

IV. Questions.

1. Have idolatry and superstition their place in the growth of religion?
2. Is prosperity necessarily a mark of God's favor?
3. What do you think of Saul's daughter, who was also David's wife, having a "household god" in their home? Does Jacob seem to have any sense of the importance of the teraphim?
4. Is the change of Jacob's name known to both the early writers?
5. Do the early prophets or preachers of Jahweh countenance conduct like that of Jacob and Rebekah?
6. What is the effect of popular stories upon national morality?
7. Wherein should we emulate Esau?

LESSON XII.

THE STORY OF JOSEPH.

(Genesis, chapters xxxvii., xxxix-xli.)

LESSON TEXT.—"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!"—PSALM CXXXIII. 1.

READ xxxvii. 3–11, 19–36, noting traces of the interweaving of two separate stories; also xl., xli. Mark xl. 15.

I. OUTLINE OF THE STORY IN THIS LESSON.

Joseph, Rachel's son, is loved by his father, but hated by his brethren. Having gone, at his father's bidding, to visit his brothers near Shechem, he is either, when they propose to kill him, sold to Ishmaelites, at Judah's instigation, or carried off by Midianites after Reuben has successfully interceded for his life. His father believes that he is dead. Joseph, however, having been sold as a slave in Egypt, rises, partly by his own diligence, partly by his power of interpreting dreams, to be governor of Egypt, and by careful foresight is able to keep the people alive through the seven years' famine which he foretells.

II. THE DUAL SOURCE OF OUR NARRATIVE.

We at once and rightly infer that this most graphic story is from the early history book. Moreover, if we read carefully, we can find clear indications that it is a combination of two different accounts, one from J, the Judean chronicler, and the other from E, who wrote in the northern kingdom of Ephraim. We cannot quite certainly separate the two accounts in detail, but in outline the following is fairly clear. *According to J*, the brothers, hating Joseph because he was his father's favourite, proposed, when he visited them in *Shechem*, to kill him, but at *Judah's* intercession *sell* him to a band of *Ishmaelites*. He is brought to Egypt and sold to *an Egyptian*, whose confidential and trusted servant he rapidly becomes. Being imprisoned on the wrongful accusation of his master's wife, he is finally, after interpreting dreams in his prison, brought to Pharaoh to interpret his dreams. Pharaoh makes him governor, and Joseph by storing grain saves Egypt from the great famine. *According to E*, Joseph *dreams* that his parents and brethren shall all bow down to him. He visits his brethren in *Dothan*, and they propose to kill him. *Reuben* persuades them to throw him instead into a pit, intending to rescue him afterwards. In the absence of the brethren Joseph is stolen by *Midianites*, taken to Egypt, and sold to *Potiphar*, the chief executioner. In Egypt Potiphar, pleased with Joseph's diligent service, makes him overseer of the prison, and Joseph interprets the prisoners' dreams. The brethren *stain Joseph's coat with blood*, and give it to Jacob as evidence of his loved son's death. Pharaoh dreams about the seven lean and the seven well-favoured kine, and also of the full and empty ears of corn; and, Joseph

interpreting the dreams, Pharaoh sets him over all Egypt, where he successfully prepares to meet the great famine. The words printed in italics suggest the main differences between the two versions of the story.

III. Noteworthy Points.

1. How natural it is that the southern version of the story should make Judah intercede for Joseph, while that current in the north makes Reuben interfere on his behalf.

2. Mark the touch in E (xxxvii. 2) which makes Joseph secretly report his brothers' failings to his father, and gives, besides, his dreams of future obeisance on the part of both parents and brethren as ground for the ill-feeling toward this youngest brother. J's reason for this is merely Israel's preference, as shown specially in the gift of a robe of state.

3. P in xxxvii. 1, and E in xxxvii.34, seem to know nothing of the change of name J tells us of in xxxii. 28. See also xlii. 1, 36, xlv. 25 (E), as contrasted with xxxvii. 3, xlii. 5, xliii. 6, 8, 11, etc. (J).

4. In the main chapter xxxix. belongs to J, and chapter xl. to E. Note that in xl. 15 E makes Joseph speak of Palestine as the land of the Hebrews.

5. The belief that dreams were a common medium by which God sent messages to men has long lingered on, even amongst partly educated people. In Deut. xiii. 1–3 and Jeremiah xxvii. 9 we see how Israel came in part to mistrust and see the evil of this belief. Nowadays we see in dreams only the half conscious action of the brain in response to accidental suggestions, usually taking place in the moments during which we are emerging from sleep.

6. As soon as we have learned how such a narrative was compiled, the difficulties caused by its evident discrepancies at once disappear, Most of the so-called difficulties in the Bible are due only to an ignorant use of it.

IV. What this Story may teach us.

1. How easily jealousy and bitterness arise and grow even among brothers. It is not only in olden days that the meanness of secretly reporting another's faults, that a foolish favouritism, or the pride which is sometimes its result, destroy altogether that fine helpfulness and sympathy which brotherhood ought to mean.

2. In common with the stories of many great men it shows how energy and diligence bear their fruit. Although in the story much of Joseph's success is attributed to the favour of Jahweh, we cannot but note how much is suggested as due to his personal character. History is full of instances which verify this.

V. Questions.

1. Name some of the points of difference between the stories which are combined in our lesson.
2. What would the part assigned to Judah in the one and to Reuben in the other story suggest as to authorship?
3. Are dreams a reliable source of information about God and God's ways? Do you know anything about the real causes of dreams?
4. What is mean and what admirable in this picture of Joseph?
5. What do you think of the conduct of Joseph's brethren?

LESSON XIII.

JOSEPH IN EGYPT.

(Genesis, chapters xlii.-xlv.)

LESSON TEXT.—"Ye that trample upon the poor, and take exactions from him of wheat." . . . "Cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."—AMOS v. 11; ISAIAH i. 17.

READ the chapters mentioned, watching for marks of dual authorship. Compare xliv. 20 with xlvi. 21, 26. Note xliv. 5, 15.

I. OUTLINE OF THE STORY IN THIS LESSON.

During the great seven years' famine throughout the whole world Jacob sends his sons, each with his ass and sack, to Egypt to buy corn. There Joseph, governor of Egypt, selling corn in person, recognises them, and insists that Benjamin, Rachel's other child, the little one whom his father had kept at home (xliv. 20), shall be brought with them when they come again. Jacob, when his sons on their return tell him this, reluctantly, when starvation stares them in the face, consents; and Joseph, having cruelly terrified his brethren by placing money in their sacks on each occasion, and finally his divining cup in Benjamin's, whom he then threatens to keep as his slave, makes himself known to them, and brings Jacob and all his kindred to Egypt, where they live in the land of Goshen.

II. THE DUAL SOURCE OF THE NARRATIVE.

As in the earlier chapters about Joseph (which we considered in last lesson), so here we find abundant traces that what we read is a compilation. The account which was current in Judah (J) has been combined with the account current in Ephraim (E). In the main, these two versions closely resemble one another; but some of the features which enable us to separate them are interesting. J uses the name Israel where E holds to Jacob. The change is very marked in xlv. 27, 28. J makes Judah stand surety for Benjamin: the northern story gives that place to Reuben. (See lesson xii. § ii.). In chapter xlii. 27 and 35 we seem to have a suggestion that contrary to J's version the brothers do not discover the money in their sacks till they have returned home. E alone tells us how Joseph charged his brethren with being spies. J gives us the story of how Joseph feasted with his brethren, "and they drank and were drunken with him" (xliii. 34, emended version). J, in agreement with his own account in xxxvii. 27, makes Joseph speak of his having been sold into Egypt (xlv. 4, 5). He similarly, in xliv. 28, corroborates his own version of the torn coat in xxxvii. 33. Thus, although we cannot be sure as to details, we can still fairly well separate the two elements, and recover the two similar but still independent accounts (J and E) which have been combined by the editor of the early collection of Israel's stories of the past.

III. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. Benjamin, in the southern version of the story at any rate, is represented as a "lad," "a little one" (xliv. 20, 22, 30, etc.). But in xlvi. 21, 26, we find that Benjamin is already the father of ten sons. (Compare the note on the age of Ishmael in lesson vi. § iii. 3 c.) We cannot well have more striking evidences of compilation than these.

2. Note in xliv. 5, 15, the southern author speaks of Joseph's "divining" and of his "divining cup," as if such things were perfectly familiar to his readers. Moreover, he does not seem to consider such things "evil in the sight of Jahweh," as they were in later times regarded (Deut. xviii. 10, 2 Kings xvii. 17). It seems undoubted that in the eighth century the habit of consulting those who professed thus to foretell coming events was still common. It was against this alliance of the worship of Jahweh with all manner of superstition that the prophetic movement which resulted in Josiah's great reformation in 621 was in part directed.

3. It is well to note that Jacob and those who came with him to Egypt, including Joseph and his family, were only seventy souls (xlvi. 27, Ex. i. 5). Their descendants, who left Egypt in the fourth generation thereafter, according to Gen. xv. 16, are said to have numbered just after the Exodus (Num. ii. 32) more than six hundred thousand fighting men alone, which cannot well represent a total of less than some two millions of persons.

IV. CAN THE NARRATIVE BEFORE US BE REGARDED AS HISTORICALLY ACCURATE?

The picture of Joseph, the governor of Egypt, selling corn in person to the whole world; Jacob's sending his ten sons each with an ass and one sack to fetch supplies from Egypt to Palestine; the seven years' famine over all the face of the earth; the fact that the cattle seem to have survived without the Hebrews having thought of utilizing them for food,—all show us (without our paying any attention to the various discrepancies of the narrative) that here we have once more one of those picturesque traditions of early days which were told at festival after festival around the sacred altars and pillars of Palestine for many generations before they were gathered together in the written form in which we have them. To attempt to regard them as serious historical narratives is only to betray ignorance of the growth of all early folk-lore.

V. QUESTIONS.

1. Mention some points which show us that we have here two versions of the story of Joseph.
2. Is the belief in divination common in very early times? Can you describe any of the ways in which men believed they could thus foretell the future?
3. What different accounts of Benjamin's age have we? How do you account for the difference?
4. What do you think of Joseph's treatment of his brethren? Was it right of him to cause his father intense suffering by his demand for Benjamin? Is it ever right to return evil for evil?
5. What does our text say about taking advantage of another's poverty? Do you think it is true?
6. Was Joseph right in using the famine which threatened the Egyptians with starvation to rob them of land, cattle, and liberty?
7. Is any bargain right which does not satisfy both buyer and seller?
8. What do you think of Isabella's words in "Measure for Measure,"—

"It is excellent
To have a giant's strength; but it is tyrannous to use it like a giant"?

LESSON XIV.

MOSES' CHILDHOOD.

(Exodus, chapters i. 1–iv. 23.)

LESSON TEXT.—"The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed."—PSALM ix. 9.

READ CAREFULLY chapters i. 8–12, ii. 1–22, iii. 1–11, and iv. 10–23, noting the composite character of iii. 1–7 and iv. 18–20. Pay special attention to iii. 14, 15.

I. THE NARRATIVE OF OUR LESSON.

1. After Joseph's death "a new king which knew not Joseph" afflicted the sons of Israel (i. 8–12).

2. When a massacre of the Hebrew infants is ordered, Moses, hidden in an ark of bulrushes by his mother, is found by a daughter of the king, who brings him up as her son. Having killed an Egyptian taskmaster, Moses flees to Midian, (ii. 1–22).

3. God appears to him in Midian, foretells the deliverance of Israel, and, having overcome Moses' objections, sends him, with Aaron as his spokesman, to Pharaoh, to demand the release of the Israelites (iii. 1–11, iv. 10–23).

II. HOW FAR IS THIS STORY HISTORICAL?

Beneath all the legendary elaboration handed down to us by these chroniclers of the eighth century we have, probably, firm historical ground beneath us when we say that Israel owes its existence, as the people of Jahweh, to the great personality who, some time prior to the settlement of the sons of Israel in Palestine, united his people as worshippers of Jahweh, and enjoined, as part of that worship, the observance of, at any rate, the rudiments of a moral law such as that which we find in a much more developed form in the "Book of the Covenant" (Exodus, chapters xx.–xxiii.). In linking, however slenderly, the stern worship of Jahweh with the righteousness which exalteth a nation, Moses laid the foundation of that national and religious life which has so powerfully moulded the whole history of civilization.

III. AUTHORSHIP OF THE PASSAGES BEFORE US.

As their whole color and tone would lead us to infer, they belong to the history book of the eighth century (JE). Chapters i. 8–12, ii. 1–22 belong to E. Chapter iii. 1–11 is composite, E and J, as we can see for ourselves, being closely interwoven. Chapter iv. 10–23 is mainly J, with interpolations from E. Suggestive points in this connection are that iii. 9 practically repeats iii. 7; that iv. 17 speaks of the *signs* to be done with the rod, whereas iv. 1–9 only knows of one; iv 19 is not the sequel of iv. 18; in iv. 21 the wonders are to be done before Pharaoh; in iv. 1–9 they are for the purpose of convincing the people. Note particularly that E, who has hitherto used Elohim for the God of Israel, now gives (iii. 14, 15) his explanation of the origin of the name Jahweh, which he, from now on, also uses in his narrative. It is consequently very difficult for the ordinary reader to distinguish J from E, though the distinction between JE and P is easily traced.

IV. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. It is impossible to say how long after Joseph the oppression began, or how long it lasted. In Exodus i. 8–12 it would

seem as though it began not long after Joseph's death, and lasted only during the reign of the Pharaoh of verse 11 and part of that of his successor (ii. 23). But in Genesis xv. 13 the slavery lasts 400 years; in Exodus xii. 40 the whole sojourn in Egypt is 430 years; in Genesis xv. 16 the return to Palestine occurs in the fourth generation from Israel's arrival in Egypt. We are dealing with legendary material; not with trustworthy chronological data.

2. To JE, apparently, Moses was of unknown parentage. The later chronicler in vi. 20 names Amram and Jochebed as the parents of Moses. It is useless to ask whence he obtained the names. Although the name of Moses' sister is not given in chapter ii., E tells us in xv. 20 that she was called Miriam.

3. The chronicler forgets in ii. 10 (see R. V. margin) that Pharaoh's daughter was not likely to speak Hebrew.

4. The story of Moses and Zipporah in ii. 16–21 reminds us of that of Rachel and that of Rebekah (Lessons viii., x.).

5. Jethro, the priest of Midian (iii. 1), is called Reuel in ii. 18. So also in Numbers x. 29. There were apparently, at one time, two versions of the story current.

6. The derivation of the name Jahweh (from Ehyeh, R. V. margin), given by E in iii. 14, is extremely doubtful. No conjecture as to the origin of the name carries great weight, but that a perfectly abstract conception like this could be used for the God whom JE pictures is contrary to all the evidence.

7. Jahweh is presented in iii. 18 as counselling Moses to ask release from Egypt on a false pretext. Verse 22 also refers, apparently, to a loan for this pretended three days' journey. These early chroniclers find no difficulty in conceptions of God's ways which at once arrest a more reflective mind.

8. It will probably surprise us to be reminded by P in vii. 7 that Moses was eighty years old when he went to speak to Pharaoh. The early story gives the impression that he was much younger.

V. Lesson Hints.

1. Compare the training of Moses in Midian, with that of Gautama, Mahomet, Elijah, and John the Baptist. Men like these are not born of the chatter of the streets.

2. Note the office of great personalities in religion as well as in history. What one man can do.

3. Analyse the alternative suggested in Heb. xi. 24, 25, in the case of Moses, and more modern instances.

VI. Questions.

1. Suggest points which show differing traditions about Moses.
2. Is the story of the Egyptian princess probable? If not, why not?
3. What do we really know about Moses?
4. Does a strong character commonly grow fast? or, on the other hand, does it require time and quiet? Give instances.
5. Are the noisy, superficial qualities those that do most and last longest? "Smooth runs the water, when the brook is deep."
6. Is the connection between religion and right conduct essential? Have there ever been immoral religions? Distinguish between feeling good and being good,

LESSON XV.

MOSES AND PHARAOH.

(Exodus, chapters iv. 27-vi. 1, vii. 8-xi. 10, xii. 21-39.)

LESSON TEXT.—"The righteous cried, and the Lord heard, and delivered them out of all their troubles."—PSALM xxxiv. 17.

READ PARTICULARLY iv. 27–v. 2, v. 20–vi. 1, v. ii. 14–18, xi. 4–8, xii. 21–36. Note who speaks to Pharaoh, the use of Moses' rod, the mention of *Aaron's* rod, and the many repetitions and inconsistencies of the story.

I. THE NARRATIVE.

1. Moses and Aaron, having by the signs won the confidence of the people, demand that Pharaoh let Israel go to sacrifice in the wilderness. But Pharaoh only increases his severity, and the people blame Moses and Aaron (iv. 27–vi. 1).

2. Moses' rod is turned into a serpent before Pharaoh; the waters are turned into blood; the plagues of the frogs, the lice, the flies, the death of the cattle, the boils, the hail and fire, the locusts, the darkness, come upon the Egyptians; but Pharaoh refuses to let Israel go, for God had hardened his heart.

3. At last the Egyptians, terrified by the death of the first-born, beseech the Israelites to go. This they, after observing the passover, do, taking with them jewels and raiment which they had borrowed from the people of Egypt.

II. THE ORIGIN OF THE STORY.

We have here the composite narrative of JE, interwoven with P's account so closely that it requires close observation to enable us to separate them. The portions you are asked to read particularly, represent, in the main, with the exception of the account of the plagues, the versions of the early narrators (JE). Points too numerous to mention show us that the various strands of the narrative differ largely from one another. In iv. 31 the people believed Moses and Aaron. In vi. 9 they "hearkened not." In iv. 30 the wonders are done before the people. In vii. 8–13 the rod becomes a serpent to convince Pharaoh. In vii. 17 "the Lord" is the person speaking, and yet "with the rod that is in mine hand" must refer to Moses. In ix. 6 *all* the cattle are killed; in ix. 19, 20, in xi. 5, in xii. 29, the cattle have evidently not been destroyed. In one account the miracles are portents, in another they are punishments. In one we have eight plagues, not including the wonders of the whitened hand and the rod; in another, five only, including that of the transformation of the rod into a serpent. These and other points show us at once that we have before us portions of at least three different accounts of the deliverance of Israel.

NOTE.—We cannot here enter into the details of the different versions. Those interested may consult the "Bible for Learners," book ii., chs. iii. and iv., or Driver's Old Testament Introduction, pp. 23–25.

III. Points to be noted.

1. The magicians are represented as able to work wonders, like those of Moses. In early days this was perfectly conceivable, for a belief in the power to work miracles lingered on until quite modern times. In the end, however, Jahweh, God of Israel, proves himself able to work greater wonders by Moses and Aaron than the gods of Egypt can do by their servants.

2. In x. 1, 20, 27, etc., God hardens Pharaoh's heart, in order that he may punish him. In xiv. 17 he entices the Egyptians to their doom, that he may get "honour" thereby. What a conception of honour and of God!

3. P's account of the passover is evidently not in accord with its setting. The people are told beforehand to prepare for it, and are *in the morning* to burn any portions of the lamb which may have remained over (xii. 1–20).

4. The number of those who left at the exodus, 600,000 *men* (xii. 37; see, also, Num. i. 45, 46, xxvi. 51), exclusive of women, children, and cattle, is obviously impossible. Especially so, if we note the details of the night. Moses and Aaron are summoned to Pharaoh after the death of the first-born: the command is given to the people to go. Although the Israelites dwell apart in the land of Goshen, gold and raiment are borrowed of the Egyptians, and in one night the chosen people leave Egypt. It would take days, or rather weeks, to get from two to three millions of people in motion.

5. We have in chapter twelve two separate legendary explanations of the origin of the great feasts of the passovers and of unleavened bread. Probably the passover was the ancient feast of the new year, and not of Israelitish origin, while the feast of unleavened bread was at first the Israelitish festival of the first-fruits of the harvest. The earliest laws as to the observance of the passover date only from about 650 B.C. In xii. 1–20 P attributes a Mosaic origin to the elaborate ritual which was enforced for the first time after the exile, in 444 B.C.

IV. What these Accounts may teach us.

1. That the miraculous is perfectly easy and familiar to all early thought. The knowledge of the unalterable order of the universe has gradually displaced it as man has progressed. Note the change even in our own time.

2. That a low conception of God and of morality goes with this low intellectual position. Criticise the conduct alike of Jahweh and Moses, as these stories represent them.

3. That we gain a great deal when we understand the origin and real character of this heritage from days long past.

V. Questions.

1. Give an outline of the narrative.
2. Mention points which show that we have here conflicting versions, combined with one another. Give, if you can, instances *not* mentioned in paragraph two.
3. Are the accounts themselves unhistorical? If so, why?
4. Is the picture of Jahweh that of a righteous God?
5. Have any traces of the mental attitude of these narratives to the supernatural survived in our own day?
6. How should we, in contrast to these early pictures, think of the character and ways of God?

LESSON XVI.

MOSES CROSSING THE RED SEA.

(Exodus, chapters xiii. 17 to xv. 21, xvi. 1 to xvii. 7.)

LESSON TEXT. — "The Lord maketh a path in the mighty waters." — ISA. xliii. 16.

READ CLOSELY xiv. 5–31, xv. 1–21, xvi. 4, 5, 14–24, xvii. 1–7. Mark the confused character of xvi. 6–11. Use a map in preparing and, if possible, in teaching the lesson.

I. OUTLINE OF THE NARRATIVE.

1. The Red Sea is divided, to allow Israel to pass through. When they have crossed, God causes the waters to return, and to overwhelm Pharaoh and the Egyptians (xiv. 5–31).

2. Moses and Israel unite in a song of triumph. Miriam and the women join in a similar song (xv. 1–21).

3. Israel is for forty years miraculously fed on "manna" (xvi. 4, 5, 14–24).

4. The rock in Horeb, at a blow from Moses' rod, gives out water for their use (xvii. 1–7. See also Num. xx.).

II. THE GREAT FACT TO WHICH THESE CONFUSED TRADITIONS POINT.

Underlying all the elaboration of later days, and perceptible even through the imaginative halo which the loving care of P and his followers have woven round the Exodus, lies the memory of the birth-hour of a nation and a religion under the influence of Moses. He it was who inspired the Semitic clans on the Egyptian border to strike a blow for liberty in the name of Jahweh, and to attribute their freer and united life to his protection. Moses brought about, probably in the thirteenth century, the first awakening of that national and religious consciousness in which lay the "promise and the potency" which gradually developed into the magnificent monotheism in which lies the proof of the Hebrew "genius for religion." In the chapters before us, however, little beyond this great initial event carries any weight of historical evidence. It is possible that some sudden discomfiture of the Egyptians by a quickly rising tide, and the facts that quails and a white, sticky gum which melts in the sun are met with in Arabia, have given a trace of local coloring to the stories; but the events, as narrated alike by JE and P, are evidently the offspring of slowly developing popular tradition.

NOTE. — Chapter xiv. apparently belongs about equally to J and P. Chapter xv. in the main to E, but with some editorial revision. Chapter xvi. is P's in the main, but also much revised. xvii. 1 *b*–7 is JE. For details consult Driver, pages 26-29; Kuenen's "Hexateuch," pages 239 and 331. For marks of legendary character, Colenso on the Pentateuch, Part I., chapter xi. On the work of Moses in general, see Kuenen's "Religion of Israel," vol. i., and Encyclopædia Britannica, article "Israel."

III. POINTS TO BE NOTICED.

1. E in xiii. 17, 18, gives fear of the Philistines as the reason for the south-easterly course assigned to the Israelites. The later

account says distinctly, xiv. 1–4, that it was that Jahweh might thereby tempt Pharaoh to his doom. It is perhaps worth while to mention the modern theory that the scene of the overthrow of Pharaoh was on the low lands on the Mediterranean coast, and not on the Red Sea at all.

2. In xiv. 10 the extreme terror of Israel at Pharaoh's hurried pursuit seems out of place, if they were an army of 600,000 warriors. It is more in accord with such a suggestion as that which underlies Deut. vii. 7.

3. There can be no possible thought in the mind of the narrators that the passage of the Red Sea was due to any natural phenomenon however abnormal (xiv. 29).

4. The song in chapter xv. cannot possibly belong to this situation. It looks back upon the conquest of Canaan (verse 15), and possibly upon the building of the temple (verses 13 and 17). Moreover, the account in verses 20 and 21 seems much more probable. Moses and a vast host of people were not likely to burst spontaneously into a long, elaborate psalm like xv. 1–18.

5. xvi. 6–12 seems hopelessly confused. Editorial revision and a corrupt text may account for the confusion.

6. xvi. 16 speaks of Israel as duly provided with tents. The marks of extreme haste in xii. 34 would not have led us to expect this. Leviticus xxiii. 42 makes them dwell in booths. But how could men build booths in the wilderness?

7. The later Rabbinical tradition said that the rock from which water flowed followed the Israelites in their wanderings. This explains 1 Cor. x. 4.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Dwell upon the power which a strong personality has; *e.g.*, the magnetism of a great general or a great conductor. A crowd rises to heroism when a hero leads. Apply this to Moses, in whom the latent character of the Hebrew clans found an almost creative inspiration. Show how this may in smaller measure be true of all resolute characters.

2. Trace the process whereby the epoch-making personalities and events of the past become gradually overlaid by legendary material, the loving elaboration whereby men magnify past days at the expense of the present. Trace the process in our individual experience. Show how the historical inquiry which seems to take glory from the past also gives a stronger ground for courage and hope in our own time.

V. Questions.

1. In what sense was Moses the founder of Israel's national and religious existence?
2. What did Hosea think about the relation of the Exodus to the worship of Jahweh (Hosea xiii. 4)?
3. How many centuries elapsed between the Exodus and the gathering together of the earliest traditions about it?
4. Why do the Israelites, in the story, not go direct to Canaan?
5. If we use them in a metaphorical sense, what may the making a way through the waters, and the bringing of water out of the dry rock, mean to Christians?

LESSON XVII.

MOSES AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

(Exodus, chapters xix., xx., xxxii.-xxxiv.)

LESSON TEXT.— "Jesus said, The first commandment of all is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. . . . The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." — MARK xii. 30, 31.

READ CLOSELY xix. 1-xx. 21, xxiv. 18, xxxii. 1-20, xxv. 10-16. Note particularly the broken character of chapter xix. Compare the decalogue of chapter xx. with that of chapter xxxiv. (see xxxiv. 28).

I. EPITOME OF THE NARRATIVE.

1. The people having gathered at Sinai, Jahweh calls Moses up to the mount, and delivers to him the commandments (xix. 1-xx. 21). Moses is on Sinai with Jahweh forty days and nights. (xxiv. 18). 2. God gives Moses two tables of stone on which the ten commandments are "written with the finger of God." During the absence of Moses, Aaron makes a golden calf, which the people worship. Moses, when he sees them, breaks the tables of stone (xxxii. 1-20). 3. Moses makes an "ark" to contain the "testimony" (xxv. 10-16).

II. STRUCTURE OF THESE CHAPTERS.

The material from the early history book JE is found in: — xix. 3-25, God's appearance at Sinai; xx., the ten words and a note as to altars; xxi.-xxiii., the book of the covenant; xxiv. 1-14, 18 *b*, Sinai narrative continued; xxxii.-xxxiv. 28, the calf, the tent of meeting, the second set of tables. But this early material is full of discrepancies. "The Book of the Covenant" is a body of precepts referring *to settled life in Palestine*. The ten commandments, as they stand here, have traces of revision, at any rate, as late as the seventh century. In the Sinai narrative we have blended together fragments of three early stories. xxiv. 1, 9-11, are clearly part of a separate account. Chapter xix. is as clearly composite. In verse 3 Moses "went up." The sequel is in verse 14. But in verse 7 Moses "came." 13 *b* breaks the connection. So do verses 20-25. P's elaborate material in xxv.-xxxi. and from xxxv. on is utterly at variance with all we know of Moses' time, and is the product of a religious ideal which did not become fully developed until many centuries after Moses. (Refer for details to Driver, page 29, or, better, to Wellhausen's History, Part I., chapter viii., section iii. Also "Bible for Learners," Book II., chapters vii.-ix.)

III. THE PROBABLE HISTORICAL KERNEL OF THE NARRATIVES.

1. *The Place and Character of Moses' Work.*—Wellhausen suggests that underlying these narratives is an earlier tradition, which brought Israel after the Exodus, not to Sinai, but to Kadesh. In Num. xx. 1-13, Massah and Meribah are in Kadesh. *There* the water is brought from the rock. *There*, not in Rephidim, is the land of Amalek. Jethro's visit, too, quite accords with Moses being at a distance from Horeb (chapter xviii.). Chapter xvii. 1-16 has transferred these occurrences to the neighborhood of Sinai. According to this view, Moses, by deciding disputed points which were brought to him in Kadesh for many years after the Exodus, laid the foundation of the Torah (properly not "law," but "tradition"). Codes of law are but the tabulated results of custom. A legislation is not given to a people complete and formulated, but grows

with the growth among them of recognized standards of right. The connection of Jahweh with the thunder and lightning about Sinai (Judges v. 4, 5) probably led to the varying accounts in which popular tradition in later times tells that there Jahweh delivered the law to Moses.

2. *The Ten Commandments.*—What precisely the "ten words" in chapter xx. are is not quite clear, and in chapter xxxiv. 28 a different set of commands are referred to. It is evident that, while we have a tradition ascribing the ten words to Moses, it is by no means certain what they are.

3. *The Ark of Jahweh.*— From the earliest accounts, the ark, or box, seems to have been the dwelling-place of Jahweh and was borne to battle before the hosts of Israel. From Num. x. 33, 36, it seems that he went and came with the ark. The whole narrative in 1 Sam. iv. 3–vii. 2 bears out this thought. See also 2 Sam. xi. 11. The idea that it was an elaborate box, made to hold the two tables, and the pot of manna, and Aaron's rod, is very late. Possibly this ancient relic of the early Jahweh worship amongst the stern warrior tribes may have contained a sacred stone. 1 Sam. iii. 3 is instructive, when compared with the later elaboration of the tabernacle and the "holy of holies."

4. *The Tent of Meeting.*— The nature of this in the early tradition is pretty clearly seen in xxxiii. 7–11 and in Num. xii. The tabernacle of Exodus xxv.–xxvii. shews us what this simple tent, where Moses is said, in the early stories, to talk with Jahweh, grew to in the priestly imagination of the time of the second temple.

5. *Summary.*— On leaving Egypt, Israel resumed the nomadic life, and, although widely scattered over the country to the south and east of Palestine, found a common authority in Moses, their chief. They continually resorted to him in Kadesh for decisions of questions too hard for the local sheiks; and his answers, given after consultation with Jahweh in the tent of meeting, laid the foundation of the law. It was thus that the sense of their national unity as the people of Jahweh, and of their duty to Jahweh as the national God and protector, came to Israel. The unity was, however, but an imperfect one, and the sense of it and of loyalty to Jahweh was only strong in times of danger.

IV. Questions.

1. In early times does law precede usage, or is law the formal statement of what has come to be regarded as customary or right?
2. In what sense was Moses a lawgiver?
3. How was the ark regarded in the time of Samuel?
4. What does JE think about the "tent of meeting"?
5. How does the elaborate detail of the tabernacle and ark in the later account compare with this?
6. What was probably the actual state of affairs during the years succeeding the Exodus?

LESSON XVIII.

THE PROMISED LAND.

(Numbers xiii., xiv., Deuteronomy xxxiv.)

LESSON TEXT.—"Be strong and of a good courage, . . . for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." — JOSHUA i. 9.

READ the prescribed passages, noting the discrepancies and repetitions of Num. xiii., xiv.

I. OUTLINE OF THE LESSON.

1. Moses sends spies into Palestine to spy out the land. On their return the people lose heart, and are condemned to wander in the wilderness till they and their generation have passed away (Num. xiii., xiv., Deut. i. 19–46).

2. Moses is forbidden to enter the promised land. He intrusts the leadership to Joshua, and then, having viewed the land from the top of Nebo, passes away alone on the mountain top (Deut. xxxi. 1–3, xxxii. 48–52, xxxiv.)

II. SOURCES OF THE NARRATIVES.

Numbers xiii., xiv.— These chapters contain the early story from JE, interwoven with a later account from P. We have many indications of this. In the early story, for instance, the spies go no further north than Hebron; they go up from and return to Kadesh; Caleb alone stills the people, and is allowed to enter the land; his companions pronounce the land rich and good. In P's account the spies traverse the whole land even to the borders of Hamath; they go up from and return to Paran; Caleb and Joshua encourage the people, and are allowed to enter the land; their companions pronounce the land poor. The two narratives are easily separated from one another, and form two complete stories pretty much as those in Lesson III. do. P's narrative consists of xiii. 1–17, 21, 25, 26 (to Paran), 32 (to thereof), xiv. 1, 2, 5–7, 10, 26–38. The rest belongs to JE.

Deut. xxxi. 1–3, xxxii. 48–52, xxxiv.—The first of these passages comes from the hand of an author who wrote the original historical introduction and conclusion to the law book of Deuteronomy, about the time of Josiah (*circ.* 620). He is familiar with the stories of JE, and uses them. Thus the third of the above passages contains matter taken direct from JE, incorporated with D's own work. The second belongs to P, and was inserted here when P was combined with the earlier JE and D. To sum up: J and E, each a collection of earlier material, were first combined about 700 B.C. D was written *circ.* 620, and combined with JE possibly prior to the exile. P was written about 450 B.C., and combined with JED after 444 B.C.

III. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. It is interesting to compare the composite narrative in Num. xiii., xiv., with D's account in Deut. i. 17–46. We have thus, when we separate P from JE, three separate accounts of the same event.

2. Note, as an interesting mark of early religious thought how Moses taunts Jahweh in Num. xiv. 16.

3. In xiii. 26 JE makes the spies return to Kadesh. From Deut. i. 19–25 we see that in the preceding passage of JE, which has not been preserved, they evidently went up from Kadesh.

4. Mark that in P's account all the spies save Joshua and Caleb say that the land is barren. It is a hungry country "that eateth up the inhabitants thereof."

5. We have two separate reasons for Jahweh's not allowing Moses to enter the land. In Deut. i. 37, iii. 26 (both D), Moses shares the penalty of the people. Perhaps the growing sense of the injustice of this leads P, in Num. xx. 12 and Deut. xxxii. 51, to give Moses' own sin as the reason.

6. For a beautiful and suggestive picture of the death of Moses, see Ruskin's "Frondes Agrestes," section 90.

IV. Is the Narrative Historical?

It is quite probable that in the conquest of Canaan some such incident (or many of them) may have remained in the memory of Israel. But, as we shall later see, the conquest of the land was very gradual. Here a clan obtains foothold, and there another. Success and failure follow in constant succession; and not till the time of David is there any complete Hebrew mastery of Palestine. Even under Saul the Philistines appear to have been masters, if not of "all Israel," yet of a considerable portion (see 1 Sam. xiii. 19, 20). The story of the sending up of spies as a preparation for a national possession of the whole land can only suggest that tradition still remembered, that in Moses' time the Hebrew clans were tempted by the land to the west and north, but were not strong enough to attack it.

V. Questions.

1. May not the attitude of Israel toward the conquest of Palestine suggest to us something with regard to our own attainment of a larger and richer life? There are giants in the way always to the indifferent and irresolute.
2. What do you think of the character of Moses?
3. What reasons are given for Moses not participating in the conquest of Palestine? Does either of them seem morally unjustifiable?
4. Tell what you can of the gradual growth and compilation of the first six books of the Bible.
5. How do you suppose the wandering tribes whom Moses roughly held together came at last to be masters of Palestine? Would the gradual conquest of the Roman Empire by the barbarians from the north suggest to you any parallel?
6. Do you know of any passages in Judges or Samuel which clearly point to a *gradual* conquest?

LESSON XIX.

BALAAM AND THE ASS.

(Numbers, chapters xxii. 2–xxiv.)

LESSON TEXT.—"All that the Lord speaketh, that must I do."—NUM. xxiii. 26.
READ the chapters prescribed.

I. SUMMARY OF THE STORY.

Balak, king of Moab, in fear of the Israelites, sends to Aram for Balaam, a prophet-magician, to curse Israel. Balaam, after being warned by God's causing his ass to speak, finds it impossible to curse Israel, and, to Balak's dismay, blesses the people of Jahweh four separate times. A later story tells us that Balaam was slain in the campaign against Midian (Num. xxxi. 8).

II DISCREPANCIES IN THE NARRATIVE.

We cannot but notice, if we read carefully, that in xxii. 20 God commands Balaam to go with the servants of Balak. In verse 22 God's anger is kindled because he went, and the angel of the Lord is sent to bar his way (verse 32). Again, in verse 21, Balaam goes "with the princes of Moab." But in 22–35 he seems to be alone. Moreover, verse 35 brings us back to the same point at which we were in verses 20 and 21. This at once suggests to us that the narrative of the ass stands by itself, and evidences of style bear us out in this. Chapter 22 generally belongs to E. The little section 22–35 belongs to J. Chapters 23 and 24 are also from JE, but evidently, in their whole outlook, of much later date than the times of which they seem to speak. The concluding prophecy, with its reference to the sceptre in Israel, and to the Assyrians, cannot be much earlier than the period at which JE arose. Moab, too, was not hostile to Israel at the time to which the story apparently refers, but was so in the eighth century.

III. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. In xxii. 4 and 7, we have "the elders of Midian" mentioned as joining with Moab. In the remainder of the story, as also in the passage from E (Josh. xxiv. 9), Moab is alone. This is especially noticeable in verses 7 and 8. Perhaps the words have been inserted by the compiler, to help to bring them into accord with xxxi. 8–16.

2. In verse 37 and verse 39 we have a hint which suggests that in the earliest version of the story, which we have lost, Balaam went back where the angel stopped him, and that then Balak went himself to bring the prophet.

3. The author seems to have no difficulty in making Balaam from Pethor by the Euphrates acquainted with and under the control of Jahweh, God of Israel.

4. In xxiii. 27 the place of the sacrifice, which had been on Pisgah (xxiii. 14), is to be changed. Accordingly, xxiii. 28 reads, "And Balak took Balaam unto the top of Peor, that looketh down upon Jeshimon." But in xxi. 20 Pisgah is described in the same way. It seems as though this hinted at a twofold version of one story.

5. In xxiv. 14 Balaam is pictured as returning to Mesopotamia. P, in xxxi. 8, describes him as slain with the kings of Midian.

6. The narrative does not seem to remember that the journey from Moab to Pethor would take over two weeks, so that Israel must have waited idle while Balak consumed a couple of months (three months, if the suggestion under point two is correct) in procuring Balaam to curse them.

7. Note that prophet and magician, or sorcerer, are almost synonymous in this legend of Balaam.

8. The strong point of this story is its thought that a prophet is one who must speak God's word at all costs. It seems to reflect, in spite of all its superstition, the spirit of the time, when men like Amos could say, "The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. If we conceive rightly of God's messages, the thought that Jahweh has those who hear them outside of Israel may prove suggestive. Consult Acts x. 35, xvii. 23–28; Rom. x. 20, 21.

2. Discuss prophecy in its best sense (the preaching of righteousness) in relation to the power of moral insight and certainty.

3. May not the development of such high faculty in Israel from soothsaying and divination have a parallel in the inward growth of moral and mental life in the individual?

V. Questions.

1. Do you think this story in any degree probable?
2. What inconsistencies does it contain?
3. Were soothsaying and sorcery in any way connected with the origin of prophecy?
4. Do you remember a famous phrase of Luther's which the lesson text suggests? What may it teach us as regards the "moral imperative" of truth?
5. Can you think of any reason which should lead men to attempt to maintain the literal truth of an early legend like this?

LESSON XX.

JOSHUA AT JERICHO.

(Joshua, chapters iii. 1—iv. 24; v. 13—vi. 27.)

LESSON TEXT.—"In God have I put my trust: what can man do against me?"—PSALM lvi. 11.

NOTE SPECIALLY the breaks in the narrative which are apparent in iii 2, 5, 13, iv. 1, 4, 11, etc. Mark in chapter vi. verses 5, 9, 10, 13, 20. Try to trace two independent narratives of the making of the cairn and of the fall of Jericho.

I. THE NARRATIVES.

1. The Jordan divides to allow the children of Israel to pass over into Palestine, and a memorial cairn is set up either at Gilgal or in the midst of the river (Josh. iii. 1–iv. 24).

2. The people at Jahweh's command compass Jericho. The walls fall down on the completion of the last circuit. The city is sacked, and the inhabitants and their possessions are "devoted to Jahweh" (v. 13–vi. 27).

II. ORIGIN OF THESE STORIES.

We must remember, although the Pentateuch in our Bibles ends with the Book of Deuteronomy, that there is no real division between Deuteronomy and Joshua. The narrative which is made up of the early history book (JE), of the Deuteronomist (D), and the priestly writer (P), continues without any real break until the death of Joshua. That is why scholars speak of the Hexateuch, and not of the Pentateuch. In the chapters of to-day's lesson we are still dealing in the main with JE's graphic composite early narrative, although it is impossible to separate every detail, owing to the fact that the editor who wove J and E together, and his successor who united both with D, have made alterations in their endeavour to combine their material into a fairly consistent story. Yet careful reading enables us to recover in the main the originally separate versions.

I. *In iii. 1–iv.* 24, note that verse 2 of chapter iii. continues i. 11, and that the "to-morrow" of verse 5 interrupts the narrative. We have here marks that one early account knew nothing about the story of the spies. There is no room within the "three days" for their seven days' expedition. The other thread of the story runs through iii. 1, 5, 10, etc. Of the cairns we have two accounts. iii. 12 stands quite alone: no reason for choosing twelve men is even hinted at. It connects, however, with iv. 4–7, 9–11a, 15–18. There we read how twelve men, chosen for the purpose, bring stones from the east of Jordan, and make a memorial cairn of them in the midst of the river. The other narrative seems to have told how the people (iv. 8) brought stones from the bed of the river and set them up in Gilgal. Only by the combining of some such parallel stories can we account for the isolation of iii. 12; for the repetition of iii. 17 in iv. 10; for the apparent contradiction of iv. 2 by iv. 8; and the more evident one between iv. 8 and 9, not to mention the impossible sequence of iv. 1, 5, 11, 16. Each account has lost something in the process of combination.

II. *In v. 13–vi.* 27. Here also we have two accounts. The key to the first lies in verse 10. Verses 3 and 4 (parts), 10, 11, 14, 15a, 16b, 17–19, 20a complete it. It tells us that Joshua is commanded to have Israel march round Jericho once daily for seven days (verses 3 and 4). He instructs the people to keep strict silence till he orders them to shout (verse 10). On the seventh day Joshua gives the command, the people raise their war-cry, the trumpets

sound, and the walls fall. The other narrative tells how a procession, consisting of an advance-guard, seven priests with rams' horns, the ark of Jahweh, and the rest of the host, went seven times round the city (probably in one day). The priests then sound the signal, the people shout, and the walls fall. The suggestions in verses 8, 9, and 13 that the people and priests carried trumpets and were blowing all the time, and that on the seventh day they went seven times round the city, are inconsistent with the earlier stories, and are probably products of an unconscious desire to make still more imposing the opening scene of the conquest.

NOTE.—Addis's "Oldest Book of Hebrew history," Putnam (a complete reprint of JE, with introduction and notes), may be consulted with great advantage by those who are interested in this aspect of the subject.

III. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. The note "unto this day" in iv. 9 is of interest. It shows that the writer of the early story already looked upon the matters of which he is writing as long past.

2. Possibly some mound of stones rising out of the shallow bed of the Jordan or somewhere on its western bank may have given rise to these tales of Israel's heroic age.

3. Mark the increasing tendency to call the ark of Jahweh (iii. 13) "the ark of the covenant." In chapter iii. verses 11, 14, 17, the alteration has been made by a later editor in spite of the fact that the change makes the Hebrew ungrammatical. P's phrase is "the ark of the testimony."

4. It does not seem to have struck the narrators that Jahweh's action in dispossessing the people of Jericho and having them cruelly put to death was an unjust one. He is Israel's God and the enemy of other nations.

5. The habit we find noted in these stories of the conquest, of putting all the inhabitants to death, was a religious one. The people are "consecrated" or "put under the ban" to Jahweh, and are killed in fulfilment of this pledge. 1 Sam. xv. is instructive in this connection.

6. It is interesting to note that tradition married Rahab, who is spared in vi. 25, to Joshua. The name turns up again quite unexpectedly in Matt. i. 5, as the mother of Boaz, and consequently Ruth's mother-in-law. No weight can be assigned to either tradition.

7. The matter belonging to P in this section is interesting (iv. 13, 19; v. 10–12). The hand of the statistician and the ceremonialist is pretty clearly evident.

IV. ARE THESE NARRATIVES HISTORICAL?

Statements as to phenomena which so conflict with all our ordinary experience as those of these stories do would require very strong scientific evidence to render them credible. In the case before us we have practically no evidence at all. We can only say that these things were told among the early national legends of Israel. The taking of Jericho may have marked a point in that gradual conquest of Canaan by the Israelites which probably extended with continually varying success through the three centuries that precede David. Of a siege of Jericho as a preliminary to a rapid organized conquest of the whole country history knows nothing.

V. QUESTIONS.

1. How did the apparent confusion of the narratives before us arise?
2. Outline the two narratives connected with the cairn. Also those of the siege of Jericho.
3. What did the Israelites mean when they "devoted" people to Jahweh? What does Samuel say about it in 1 Sam. xv.? Was he right?
4. Does God have favourites among his children as the Israelites thought he had?

LESSON XXI.

GIDEON AND THE ANGEL.

(Judges, chapters iii. 12—30; vi. 1—32.)

LESSON TEXT.—"Who through faith subdued kingdoms, . . . from weakness were made strong, put to flight the armies of the aliens."—HEB. xi. 33, 34.

NOTE SPECIALLY the phrases by which both stories (and other stories in Judges) are introduced and concluded (iii. 12, 15, 30; vi. 1, 6, 8; viii. 28). Mark also the strained character of vi. 31, 32.

I. OUTLINE OF THE STORIES.

1. Eglon, king of Moab, oppresses Israel; and Ehud, pretending a secret mission, stabs him treacherously (Judges iii. 12–30).

2. The Midianites make raids upon Israel. Jahweh appears to Jerubbaal, and promises him his help in destroying the invader. As a sign, fire out of the rock at Ophrah consumes Gideon's offering. How a later story explains the origin of the name Jerubbaal (Judges vi. 1–32).

II. THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

Our lesson to-day comes not from the combined work of JE, D, and P, which we have been studying so far, but from a collection of stories about Hebrew heroes who arose while as yet there were no kings in Israel. This collection in its present form is found in Judges ii. 6 to xvi. 31. A little examination shows us that each of these early stories is set in a framework which is nearly always the same. Israel does that which is evil in the sight of Jahweh, is delivered into the hand of an enemy, cries unto Jahweh, the enemy is subdued, and the land has rest. These settings do not belong to the stories themselves, but come from the hand of some one who, writing in the spirit of Deuteronomy, gave the collection its present form some time after 621. We shall see that he has also made alterations and insertions in the narratives. But behind all this, forming the main thread of each, lie the tales of the heroes "to flame-eyed listeners told" long years before by many a grandsire in Israel. They point to the time when a clan under some passing danger found deliverance in a leader who for the moment fanned anew their sense of unity in Jahweh, and, the danger over, resumed his ordinary avocation. The idea that these "Judges" attained to a lasting rulership over anything like a union of the tribes does not belong to the earliest form of the stories. Thus regarded, we may catch in these pictures a pretty clear insight into the condition of things which prevailed in Palestine while Israel's foothold there was still but a precarious one.

III. THE STORIES BEFORE US.

1. Judges *iii. 12–30*, verses 12, 15, 30, show us the Deuteronomic setting of the story. The rest of this despicable narrative of treachery calls for little comment. It evidently reflects the atmosphere of "border raiding" in Israel, and throws some light upon barbarous days. The marginal reading (RV) on verses 19 and 26 is interesting, as indicating the general religious character of the time.

2. Judges *vi. 1–32*. The Deuteronomic framework is here again easily marked (vi. 1, 6b, 8a; viii. 28). Verses 7 to 10 are also evidently Deuteronomic, while the story of the call in 11 to 24 is clearly much earlier. The second part of the narrative, verses 25 to 32, belongs to a time when men had come to feel that sacred trees and pillars (Asherahs) could not be associated with the

worship of Jahweh, and that the name "Baal" could no longer be applied to him. The explanation of Gideon's name in verse 32 is forced. The name of Baal was thus used only by those who honored him, and Jerubbaal could not be applied to Gideon in any other way. The story is an attempt to explain away the fact that one of Israel's heroes bore a name which had come to be looked upon as idolatrous. Gideon means "hewer," and is simply a title.

IV. Noteworthy Points.

1. In verse 11 "the oak" is the sacred terebinth at Ophrah, one of the early sanctuaries of Jahweh, which prior to 621 were found throughout the land.

2. In verse 14 (RV marg.) we see that it is Jahweh himself who appears to Gideon. Call to mind the story of Jahweh's appearance to Abraham in personal form (Lesson V.), and of his wrestling with Jacob (Lesson XI.).

3. Gideon's fear in verse 22, contrasted with his attitude in verse 16, suggests that we possibly even here have not the story in its earliest form.

4. In verse 26 the need for a second altar of Jahweh in Ophrah, as though the one in verse 24 were not sufficient, is not apparent. The real reason is, as has been suggested, that the writer of verses 25 to 32 has come to regard the associations of the Ophrah sanctuary as evil, and wishes to mark clearly Gideon's attitude toward Baal worship.

5. As late as the time of David men were called after Baal. "Baal's warrior," "Baal's man," are the names of two of Saul's sons, and "Baal knows" is the name of one of David's. All this shows us that not till later was honor to Baal looked upon as incompatible with honor to Jahweh. Indeed, in early times Jahweh might be called Baal without incongruity (1 Chron. viii. 33; xiv. 7).

6. 2 Sam. xi. 21 shows us how a later writer actually alters Jerubbaal into Jerubbesheth with a view to more surely avoiding any mention of Baal in connection with Jahweh's hero. Similarly Meribaal is altered into Mephibosheth, and Ishbaal into Ishbosheth, while Beeliada is altered to Eliada. In earlier times these Baal names caused no difficulty to the worshippers of Jahweh.

7. The phrase "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord" is given in the Deuteronomic framework as the cause of the evils which befell Israel. To the Deuteronomic writer it meant following the customary usages of the local sanctuaries. These, however, were not considered idolatrous until his own day.

V. Questions.

1. What was the condition of Israel for generations after the so-called "conquest" under Joshua?
2. How were Baal worship and sacrifice at the high places regarded during this time?
3. What would the story of God's appearance to Gideon suggest as to its date?
4. What did men think about these things when Deuteronomy was written?
5. Discuss Judges xvii. 6 in relation to the time of the Judges.
6. Can a country be called a free country where every man is allowed to do just what happens to seem right to him?

LESSON XXII.

GIDEON'S BAND.

(Judges, chapters vi. 33—viii. 28.)

LESSON TEXT.—"There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few."—1 SAM. xiv. 6.

MARK ESPECIALLY the numbers in chapter vii. Also that the story seems to come to a natural conclusion in vii. 25. Compare vii. 23 with viii. 4; vii. 25 with viii 12. Mark the motive in viii. 19. Refer throughout the lesson to a map.

I. THE STORY.

Gideon, having been called by Jahweh to deliver Israel, is reassured by fresh signs of Jahweh's favour, on the next invasion by the "Children of the East." He summons the northern tribes, but has twice to reduce the number of his followers, until only 300 remain with whom to attack the encamped army of the enemy, 135,000 men strong. God again kindles his courage by a sign, and orders him to approach the camp at night on three sides, with concealed torches and trumpets. At a given signal the torches are exposed, and the sleeping host is awakened by trumpet blast and the war shout "for Jahweh and Gideon." They fall into hopeless confusion, and the rout becomes a massacre, in which the men of Israel join. Gideon, with his 300, falls on the remnant of the fugitives and completes his work, and finally declines the throne which Israel offers him.

II. MARKS OF A SIMPLER KERNEL TO THIS NARRATIVE.

When we read these chapters carefully, we cannot help noticing that the main story seems to end at vii. 25, or at the close of the little note, viii. 1–3. Moreover, in viii. 4, Gideon, who appears in vii. 23 to have been joined by the Israelites in the pursuit, suddenly reappears with only his original 300. In viii. 12, too, the kings of Midian are called Zebah and Zalmunna; but in vii. 25 the princes of Midian have already been slain, and are called Oreb and Zeeb. Finally, in viii. 19, we find a ground for Gideon's raid against Midian, in the mention for the first time that his brothers had been killed by Zebah and Zalmunna at Tabor, so that Gideon is under the obligation of exacting vengeance for their blood. All this suggests to us that viii. 4–21, with possibly verse 27, contains an early and simpler version of the story of Gideon, of which unfortunately we have lost the commencement. According to this it is his duty as an avenger of his brothers' death which causes Gideon with 300 of his clan to fall upon the Midianites and put to death Zebah and Zalmunna, the murderers of his kinsfolk.

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MORE ELABORATE VERSION.

It is not difficult to understand, especially if we remember how loosely Hebrew historians appear to use numbers, how this simpler story developed into the narrative before us. What was at first a

mere act of private vengeance becomes a national deliverance, to which Jahweh specially calls our hero even before the definite occasion has arisen. All Israel appear to participate in the victory, though only certain of the tribes are mentioned, and the numbers of the enemy are exaggerated beyond all possible limits. Finally, around the story of the ephod which Gideon made in Jahweh's honor, out of Zebah's and Zalmunna's golden camel-ornaments, there has grown up the statement in verses 24–27. We find this tendency towards amplification in all early narratives, although it is not always that we have preserved to us, as we have here, suggestions of the facts which gave them birth.

IV. Noteworthy Points.

1. In the longer narrative Gideon, after all, is not so heroic as he at first appears. It takes no less than four miracles to bring him to the point of action, while that action is mainly to stand still and watch the Midianites fall on one another. In the earlier version his act of vengeance is one of wild personal daring.

2. The picture of the host of Midian cannot for a moment be regarded as historical. A host of a hundred and thirty-five thousand men, with camels "as the sand which is upon the sea-shore for multitude," could not have found subsistence in Palestine. It would have taken Gideon more than one night to surround them. His war-cry and trumpet blasts would have been inaudible. These graphic details, intelligible and familiar in petty tribal wars, become nonsense when applied to a vast host such as this.

3. In viii. 2 we have an excellent example of one of Israel's own sayings, "A soft answer turneth away wrath." Prov. xv. 1.

4. The wild, barbaric ferocity of viii. 4–21 seems to mark it off completely from the more prudent and cautious Gideon of chapters vi. and vii.

5. What the ephod in viii. 27 was, no one knows. The late priestly writer of the Pentateuch regards the ephod as a garment. It seems quite probable that this is the product of an ecclesiastical imagination. Here, as in early Israel, the ephod appears to have been a golden image of some kind. This is quite intelligible, if it were made of the "crescents that were on the camels' necks" (viii. 21). The later mention of 1,700 shekels of gold as devoted to this purpose would raise a difficulty if it were not so obviously an exaggeration. In the early story Jerubbaal takes the golden trappings from the camels of the two kings' and makes of them a little votive image, which he places in the shrine at Ophrah.

6. The graphic power of much of this narrative is worthy of attention. Even the elaboration is that of popular imagination, and quite without artifice, so that the story is full of clear, strong colour, and may well have been a favourite at the festal gatherings.

V. Questions.

1. What points suggest that an earlier story underlies this elaborate narrative?
2. Do you think it probable that one of the Midianites should have heard of Gideon, as appears in vii. 14?
3. What does viii. 6 mean?
4. What do you think about the signs in this story?
5. In the higher plane of religious life, what does the New Testament tell us about seeking signs? Matt. xvi. 4; John iv. 48; Luke xvi. 31.

LESSON XXIII.

THE STORY OF SAMSON.

(Judges, chapters xiii.—xvi.)

LESSON TEXT.—"Wisdom is better than strength."—ECCL. ix. 16.

READ CAREFULLY chapter xv. (RV); also note xiii. 1, xv. 20, xvi. 31.

I. THE PERIOD TO WHICH THESE STORIES REFER.

This period, extending from the time when the Hebrew tribes first began to obtain an uncertain footing in the "Holy Land" until the time when we can in Saul trace the first beginning of what we can truly call a national life, is one upon which such stories as those before us cast only a very dim light. It shows us the gradual welding and fusing of the nomads from the desert with one another and in part with the inhabitants of the land. It shows the early worship of Jahweh alongside other worships, intermingling with and sometimes hardly distinguishable from them. Images, household idols, sacred places, are all part of the religion of the people of Jahweh. The whole atmosphere is full of the densest ignorance and superstition. The national conditions which give a certain security to life and property have not arisen. Every man does what is right in his own eyes. The duty of revenge; the blood feud; the law of retaliation, "an eye for an eye,"—are the only forms of justice. When Tennyson says of other days that they

> "Were filled with rapine, here and there a deed
> Of prowess done redressed a random wrong,"

he not unaptly describes the time of the Judges. We are no longer dealing with mere beautiful legend, but with echoes of wild days, set sometimes in a later setting, and nearly always distorted by some measure of legendary material or by the unconscious exaggeration of oft-repeated tradition.

II. THE STORY OF SAMSON.

A careful reading of the story puzzles us at first. Samson is twice said to have judged Israel, and yet we find no trace at all of such a fact in the narrative. Although the men of Judah do appear once (only to disappear suddenly without explanation), it is evident that the interest of the story lies solely in the personal strength of the hero, not in any national end he served. Moreover, the incidents of the bees making honey in a putrid carcass, and of the slaughter of the Philistines with the "jawbone of an ass," have apparently a lack of reason for their absurdity which makes them doubly hard. The relation, too, of Samson's long hair to his strength is not intelligible at first sight. The incident of our hero's calmly going out and catching three hundred foxes or jackals, and tying them tail to tail in pairs with a lighted firebrand securely fastened between the tails, excites our laughter, but never suggests itself as even remotely possible. Probably we have some distorted reminiscences of valiant and mighty deeds underlying a good deal of the story, and especially such incidents as that of the gates of Gaza. Without doubt, too, a strong flavour of the

times when the very name Philistine was a terror to Israel ran through the whole before it came to the hands of the annalist, who made Samson a "Judge" and prefaced his history with the little introduction, xiii. 1. But does not something further underlie all this?

III. Certain Mythical Material.

Nearly all religions contain elements of nature-worship. Natural phenomena give rise to myth. Of all such phenomena, that of the sun in his struggle with his enemies as the days shorten, or in his fight with the darkness and storm, or beneficent and blessing in the spring, is the most striking; and sun myths are consequently met with in all mythologies. Now some features in this story suggest that we have here mythical material, in part of which the sun is portrayed as a hero warring against his enemies. The first syllable of Samson's name means "sun." The strength of the sun lies in his long bright rays. Shorn of them, he is powerless. The yellow jackals with firebrands in their tails suggest the lurid thunder-clouds which the hot sun brings, and whose flashes ignite the standing corn. The jawbone is the ragged edged cloud of the sun's wild battle in the heavens: from the hollow of it, when battle is over, the rain springs forth. It has been suggested that the lion is the lion of the Zodiac, and that the myth means that, when the sun passes through the lion, the bees make their combs, and, when he leaves it, honey is ready. But the interpretation of metaphor is always dangerous; and in the two last items, at any rate, the explanation is only good till we can find something better. In the case of the jawbone it is possible that by a mistake in the verse of poetry quoted it has been transmuted into its present form from an original which ran, "At Lehi a heap, two heaps, at Lehi I have slain a thousand men." The rest of the story is consequent on this mistaken interpretation. (Lehi, translated jawbone in xv. 15, 16, 17, is the name of a place elsewhere. Compare verse 19 A. V. with same verse RV).

Note.—Refer to any book on mythology for sun-myths. Cox's "Tales of Ancient Greece" has some good material, See Bacon's "Genesis of Genesis," pp. 13, 14, for the Lehi story. Note, also, "Bible for Learners" on Samson.

IV. Noteworthy Points.

1. The miraculous appearance of the angel to announce Samson's birth is one of the well-known marks which later reverence attaches to the histories of its heroes.

2. In xiii. 19, it has been conjectured, the record originally told that the angel touched the offering, as in vi. 21. The present text does not give good sense.

3. In xiv. 17 Samson's wife weeps (because of the threat in verse 15) the whole seven days of the feast. Yet the threat was not made till the fourth day (verse 15 RV marg.).

4. When we read xv. 18, we cannot but ask, "Where are the 3,000 men of Judah of verse 11?" The whole narration is evidently loosely compacted and of varying material.

V. Questions.

1. Was Samson a "Judge"? If so, why?
2. Tell what you can of the time of "the Judges."
3. How did these stories about Samson originate?
4. Do you know any Greek or Indian sun stories?
5. Do you admire Samson? Had he any admirable qualities?
6. What does the lesson text say? (See also Prov. viii. 11.)
7. What is the best kind of wisdom? (Prov. ix. 10; Jas. iii. 17.)

LESSON XXIV.

STORY OF RUTH.

(The Book of Ruth.)

LESSON TEXT.—"The Lord blesseth the habitation of the righteous."—PROV. iii. 33.

READ more especially chapters i. 1–8, 16–22, ii., iv. 9, 10. Compare iv. 18–22 with Matt. i. 2–6.

I. THE BOOK OF RUTH.

In our Bibles the Book of Ruth is placed at the end of the Book of Judges, as if it were a continuation or appendix to it. The reason for its being so placed lies in the reference in the first verse to the days when the Judges judged. The book does not really belong here. In the Hebrew Bible it is not classed with the historical books, but comes nearly at the end of the Bible, among writings which the Jews did not rank in the same class with "the law and the prophets" at all It forms one of the five books which, because each formed a little roll of parchment, were called Megilloth (rolls) by the Jews. The others were the Song of Songs, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther. They were none of them "holy scripture," as the books of the law and the historical books and prophets were, and were probably later additions to the Bible, which were at first, at any rate, looked upon as being of uncertain value. It is practically impossible to determine the date at which this idyl was written. It seems, however, to belong to exilic or post-exilic times. Many things point to this 1. The writer seems to be dwelling upon an ideal and distant past (*cf.*, *e.g.*, iv. 7). 2. The picture he presents can hardly be true of the turbulent, half-savage days of the Judges. 3. He uses words which belong to the time when Hebrew was changing into Aramaic. 4. The position of the book in the Hebrew canon supports the same conclusion. It seems probable that this story, with its atmosphere of quiet, courtly godliness, was elaborated from some tradition as to David's ancestors by some one who lived far from the wild times of Gideon.

II. THE STORY.

Elimelech and Naomi, his wife, with their two sons, leave Bethlehem, their home, and go to live among the Moabites. Elimelech shortly afterwards dies. His sons marry, and settle down in Moab. On their death, not long after, Naomi, broken-hearted, resolves to go back to Bethlehem. But Ruth, her daughter-in-law, thinking nothing of the sacrifice involved, insists on returning with her. There Boaz, a prosperous member of Elimelech's family, won by Ruth's character and demeanour, fulfils the part of a nearer relative, and, buying up the family property, takes his kinsman's childless widow to wife. From this union David, the greatest of Israel's kings, is descended. A little genealogical table is appended to the book.

III. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. From Deut. xxv. 5–10 we find that it used to be regarded as right in Israel, when a woman's husband died and left her without children, for his brother to marry the widow. The first son of this marriage took the place of an eldest son of the deceased. The dread that a family might become extinct, and its name be lost from Israel, was probably the ground for this custom. The writer of Ruth extends the rule, so as to apply not merely to a brother, but, failing such, to the nearest kinsman of the dead man. He also seems to have Lev. xxv. 25 in his mind,

and, interpreting it somewhat freely, makes it Boaz's duty, if no nearer kinsman will, to redeem his family property and keep it from falling into the hands of strangers.

2. We have no note of David's ancestry in his earlier histories. Later days doubtless gave rise to the tradition of the book before us. What seems strange is that Ruth is at once a Moabitess and an ancestress of David. Moreover, if, in accord with later tradition, Rahab was the mother of Boaz, there must have been two strains of alien blood in David's veins. In this connection it is interesting to ask whether there is some deeper, unstated reason below the statement that David intrusted his parents to the king of *Moab* (1 Sam. xxii. 3). None of these traditions, however, give us information on which we can rely.

3. The fact that Ruth, at Naomi's suggestion, practically makes the first overtures to Boaz, and his statement in iv. 10 that he *bought* Ruth to be his wife, ought only to remind us that our story arose in an age in which our modern ideas on such matters were wholly undeveloped.

4. The picture of the elders at the gate of the city (iv. 1, 2, 11) appears to be drawn from life. Cities were small, and the gate was the universal rendezvous. There business was transacted, town affairs were discussed, and judicial decisions were given. It was the place of the town meeting, without any necessity of formal convention.

IV. What may the Book teach us?

The three main characters, Naomi, Ruth, Boaz, are all worthy of admiring imitation. As we read, we cannot but feel the power of the informal religion which they illustrate. Simple courtesy, unostentatious kindliness, and unartificial, true-hearted life are the things the writer most reverences and helps us to reverence. His sympathies are neither local nor national. Religion, in so far as it is a thing of letter and observance, does not engross him. His humanity helps him to be universal. As the little drama unfolds, it does but discover that which belongs to us all. Ruth, the gleaner, losing her own sorrow in that of the mother-in-law she loved; Boaz, the prosperous peasant, kindly toward those beneath him, quickly touched by generous feelings, upright alike in thought and deed; Naomi, gentle, sympathetic, full of the interest and welfare of others, — all of them belong to the great Church Universal. "By their fruits ye shall know them" is Christ's test. Tried thereby, the religion of the Book of Ruth falls not far short of the highest. The eternal realities of religion are revealed in the commonest human experience. The creed of creeds is "wrought in loveliness of perfect deeds"; and not those who cry, "Lord, Lord," loudest, but those who do God's will, in Christ's spirit, enter the kingdom.

V. Questions.

1. Where is the Book of Ruth in the Hebrew Bible? Where is it in ours? What led to the change?
2. When was the book written? Give reasons for your answer.
3. What does late Hebrew tradition say about Rahab and Boaz?
4. Is this book a religious book? If so, why?
5. What do you think are the universal elements in religion?
6. What did Jesus Christ teach on this point?
7. Does the ordinary conception of religion agree with his?

LESSON XXV.

SAMUEL.

(1 Samuel, chapters i.–iii.)

LESSON TEXT.—"Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth."—1 SAM. iii. 9.

READ i. 20–28, ii. 18, 19, iii. Then read carefully ii. 1–10, and 27–36, asking what relation they have to the rest of the story. Verses 10b and 35 should catch your attention. Look out Shiloh and Ramah and the "hill country of Ephraim" on a map.

I. THE NARRATIVE.

Samuel's mother, Hannah, dedicates him to the service of Jahweh, and takes him to Eli, that he may bring the lad up as a priest in the sanctuary of Shiloh, where the "ark of Jahweh" was kept. One night, when Samuel is sleeping beside the ark in the sanctuary, Jahweh calls to him, and tells him that judgment is coming upon the house of Eli because of the wickedness of Eli's two sons. Samuel grows in Jahweh's favor, and becomes a seer, or prophet.

II. MARKS OF COMPILATION.

Hannah's psalm, ii. 1–10, is a palpable insertion into the story, of matter which does not in the least refer to it. It is a triumphal song in praise of the glory and power of Jahweh by a victorious warrior, who refers loyally at the close unto Jahweh's "king." There never had been a king in Israel in Hannah's time. The passage, which does not belong to any of the Samuel narratives, is a late interpolation. It may possibly have been put in here because of the phrase in v. 5. Its insertion shows us how roughly these books were edited. The verses ii. 27–36 also break the thread of the narrative. Their presence here takes away completely all meaning from the message which comes as a blow to Eli in chapter iii. When we examine them carefully, we find that they come from a later source. The reference in verse 35 is apparently to Zadok, from whom the priests at Jerusalem from the time of Solomon traced their descent. "Mine anointed" seems to refer to a king in Jerusalem. The writer, too, apparently has in mind in verse 36 the abolition of the local sanctuaries under Josiah when the Levites, who had served in them, came and sought refuge with the priests at Jerusalem. From all this we conclude that this section is a Deuteronomic enlargement of the narrative, and is to be classed with the later insertion (vii. 2–16), which is written in the same spirit and from the same standpoint. When we remove these two sections (ii. 1–10, 27–36), the narrative reads connectedly. It belongs to an account of Samuel and Saul, which is one of the main elements in the Book of Samuel. It was composed from traditions current in North Israel in the eighth century, and can be pretty easily separated from the rest of the book. It consists of the following connected passages: i., ii. 11–26; iii. 1–21; viii., x. 17–26; xv., xvii. 1 to xviii. 5; xviii. 12–19; xviii. 28 to xix. 17; xxi. 2–10; xxii., xxiii. 1–13; xxvi.; 2 Sam. i. 6–16.

III. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. The "three bullocks" of i. 24 become "the bullock" in the following verse. See R.V., marg.

2. The description of the sacrificial customs in ii. 12–17 is most interesting. (*Cf.* i. 4, 5.) The priest receives whatever a chance thrust of a fork into the cauldron may bring him. A demand for raw flesh is apparently regarded as unheard of. Compare this whole picture with the elaborate regulations of P, the law book of the second temple. (Num. xviii. 8f; Lev. vii. 28f, etc.) Deuteronomy xviii. 3 also contradicts the passage before us. It shows us the usage which was formulated in the sixth century.

A sacrifice in early times was evidently boiled and eaten by those offering it. It was a regular family feast at one of the sanctuaries, where the priest (if one was present) was indebted for any share he might receive to charitable custom. (1 Sam. i. 4, 5.) The sweet savour of the burning of the fat and other parts was Jahweh's portion.

3. The ephod of ii. 18 is evidently a garment. In later days, when Israel became priest-ridden and all ritual grew elaborate, we find that the ephod plays a prominent part. Exodus xxxix. 1–26 (part of P). The ephod of early Israel seems to have been some kind of image used for purposes of divination along with the teraphim, or household idols. The usage casts some light on Jahweh worship prior to the time of Amos. (See Judges viii. 27, xvii. 5; 1 Sam. xxi. 9.)

4. The nameless "man of God" who appears unintroduced in ii. 27, and as mysteriously disappears from the scene after verse 36, should point us to the conclusion referred to in § II.

5. Samuel's sleeping in the temple where the ark of the Lord was (iii. 3, R.V.) shows us how Jahweh's ark was at first regarded and treated. From this rough box, which was looked upon as a kind of guarantee of Jahweh's favour, the priests of later days elaborated the "ark of the covenant" or "testimony" enshrined in the "holy of holies," approachable by none save the high priest himself, and even by him only on the great day of atonement. (Ex xxv. 10–22; Lev. xvi.) Refer to Lesson XVII. § III. 3.

6. Samuel is not of priestly family. Chronicles tries to amend this by giving him another genealogy. (1 Chron. vi. 34.)

7. Mark how the authorized version makes the last clause of chapter iii. belong to chapter iv. (*Cf.* R.V.)

IV. What the Story may teach us.

1. That the Bible grew. Its narratives were in most cases pieced together from varying traditions, and were edited from time to time to bring them more into accord with fresh ideas of what was fitting. They themselves, when we examine them, tell us this.

2. That religious usages tend to develop from simple and primitive to formal and elaborate. That, when we attempt to ascribe a formal and elaborate system of ritual to primitive times, we are apt to be mistaken.

3. The lesson text may have a meaning for us, too, who have a thought of God very different from that of Samuel or Samuel's time. God's voice is everywhere for those who wish to hear it. Refer to the lines from Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," beginning, "A presence that disturbs me with the joy," etc. In the educated conscience, in every lesson of experience, in suffering and calamity even, God is speaking to and teaching men. God never was so near us and in so many ways as he is to-day.

V. Questions.

1. How were early writings put together?
2. Do you find any traces of the process in this lesson?
3. Can you describe a sacrifice to Jahweh as it was in early times?
4. What do you know about the ephod?
5. Do religious thought, usage, and ritual develop? Are an elaborate ritual and a fixed creed helpful to the growth of true religion? Was it so in Israel? What did Jesus think about these things?
6. How does God speak to *us?*

LESSON XXVI.

THE ANOINTING OF SAUL.

(1 Samuel, chapters viii.–xi.)

LESSON TEXT.—"Look not on the height of his stature; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."—1 SAM. xvi. 7.

READ the account named above, marking wherein Samuel's power as a "seer" is thought to lie. Compare the narrative in ix., x. 1–16, xi., with that in viii., x. 17–26.

I. THE STORIES.

Saul, the son of Kish, being unable to find certain asses his father had lost, comes to Samuel, the seer, that he may divine for him where to find them. Samuel, having taken him to a sacrificial feast on the "high place," anoints him on the following day king of Israel. Afterward Saul, having obtained a great victory over the Ammonites, is publicly recognized as king at Gilgal (ix., x. 1–16, xi.).

The other narrative tells us that the people, owing to the wickedness of Samuel's sons, demanded a king. He declares to them that Jahweh will grant them what they want, but warns them of the dire results. He then calls the people together, and casts the sacred lot to discover whom Jahweh shall choose. The lot falls upon Saul, who is then and there recognized king by acclamation, and receives the adherence of the men of valour (viii., x. 17–26).

II. SOURCES OF THESE NARRATIVES.

The second of the accounts quoted (viii., x. 17-27) comes from the little history of Samuel and Saul of which we spoke in our last lesson. It belongs probably to the latter half of the eighth century, and seems to have come from the hand of a writer in the northern kingdom The consciousness that monarchy leads to tyranny and the enslavement of the people is clearly seen in chapter viii What is there said is a pretty clear statement of that overburdening of his subjects to which the pomp of Solomon led. The revolt of the northern tribes was its result.

The other account comes from a history of Saul written probably in Judah nearly a century earlier. In many ways—*e.g.*, in its picture of Samuel and the sacrifice on the high place, in attributing the establishment of the monarchy to Saul's great victory over the Ammonites, and in other points—it seems more accurately to reflect the actual course of events We find the work of this narrator so far as it has been preserved to us, in ix. 1-x. 16, xi 1-15, xiii. 1-7a, 15b-18, 23, xiv. 1-46. We should remember that even this earlier account was written at least a century later than the events which it records.

III. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. Mark how chapter viii. continues chapter iii., where the theme is the wickedness of Samuel's sons. The interesting narrative in chapters iv.–vii. altogether breaks the thread of the story.

2. The author of the later narrative (viii., x. 17–26) looks upon the choice of a king as equivalent to a rejection of Jahweh (viii. 7b). In the other account Jahweh spontaneously orders Samuel to anoint Saul, that as king he may save Israel from the oppression of the Philistines (ix. 16).

3. The reign of Solomon brought about the state of things described in viii. 11–18. Saul and David were both careful not to infringe on the freedom and independence of their fellow-country-

men. Solomon dreamed dreams of world-empire, and forgot the interests of the sturdy clansmen to whom Saul and David owed their thrones.

4. In this connection the little fable of the trees that went forth to anoint a king over them is interesting. (Judges ix. 8–15.)

5. The suggestion in ix. 8 that Samuel will play the soothsayer, and discover the lost asses for a consideration, is a mark of the times, not to be overlooked.

6. In ix. 9 we have an editor's explanatory note. Prophecy, which in Amos came to mean impassioned preaching of righteousness, was in earlier times closely connected with magic and soothsaying. Perhaps that accounts for Amos's declaration that he is no prophet. (Amos vii. 14. R.V., marg.)

7. In ix. 12 the people sacrifice on the "high place," and Samuel goes to bless the sacrifice. It was not till long after that men came to regard the worship on the "high places" as illegal. They were the natural sanctuaries of Jahweh in early Israel. Note also that the sacrifice is a feast (ix. 22–24).

8. The men "going up to God to Beth-el" (x. 3) are men going to sacrifice at another of the local sanctuaries.

9. The origin of the phrase (x. 11) "Is Saul also among the prophets?" must have been obscure. The fact that Saul is still only a private individual in the story before us, and not a subject of national attention, renders this account less probable than that in xix. 24.

10. Compare x. 24, "whom Jahweh hath chosen," with xii. 13, "whom ye have chosen."

11. The men of Jabesh-gilead have no knowledge of there being a king in Israel. Chapter xi., as we have seen, does not continue x. 17–27, but x. 16.

12. The time allowed in chapter xi. for the sending out of messengers through all Israel, the return of the messengers to Jabesh-gilead, the gathering of three hundred and thirty thousand men, and the utter rout of the Ammonites, is utterly inadequate. Moreover, it seems unlikely that Nahash would have quietly waited while all the elaborate preparations for his overthrow are being made. Graphic coloring, not historical accuracy, is what these early chroniclers delight in.

13. "The men" in xi. 12 are apparently the "base fellows" of x. 27 (R.V., marg.). Possibly part of that verse may belong to chapter xi. There is here considerable discrepancy between the reading of the Hebrew text and that of the Segtuagint. We may have lost the original form of verse 27.

IV. Questions.

1. Sketch the two accounts of Saul being made king.
2. What do you think of the conception of the office of seer in these early stories?
3. Where were sacrifices offered in Samuel's time? Was any priest necessary? What did they think about sacrifice two hundred years later, when Deuteronomy was written? (Deut. xii. 13, 14.)
4. What does the author of chapter viii. think about monarchy? Do you agree with him? Were David and Saul kings in the modern sense? Was Solomon? What about an *elected* monarch?
5. Are there any real kings among us? Are the European monarchs real kings or sham kings?
6. Is any form of government necessary? If so, why? What should be the ideal of national life? May the "kingdom of God" be a national ideal?

LESSON XXVII.

DAVID: HIS YOUTH.

(1 Samuel, chapters xvi., xvii.)

LESSON TEXT.—"I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts."—1 SAM xvii. 45.

READ carefully the prescribed chapters. Contrast specially what is said of David at the close of chapter xvi. with the account of him in chapter xvii.

I. THE STORY.

David, the youngest son of Jesse, was tending his father's sheep, when he was sent for and anointed by Samuel. Saul, afterwards, soothed in one of his dark fits by David's playing, makes him his armour-bearer. David later on goes out alone, armed only with a sling, to slay Goliath, the Philistine giant, who had challenged the armies of Israel. Goliath falls by his hand, and utter rout of the panic-stricken Philistines ensues. (1 Sam. xvi., xvii.)

II. THE COMPOSITE NATURE OF THESE CHAPTERS.

The account in chapter xvii. seems to continue chapter xv. Saul first came to know David as the young champion over Goliath (xvii. 56), and takes the heroic lad into his service (xviii. 2). The good conduct of the stripling insures his promotion, and Saul at length (xviii. 5) sets him over the men of war. But in chapter xvi. David has already been openly anointed king by Samuel (xvi. 13), and, having become a "mighty man of valour and a man of war" (xvi. 18), is recommended to Saul on account of his skill on the harp. Saul receives him into his household, "loves him greatly," and makes him, as head of the warriors, armour-bearer to the king. Yet in the next chapter David appears as a stripling whom the Philistine disdains because of his ruddy countenance, unused to arms, trusting only in his shepherd's sling. He is, moreover, unknown to Saul, and is set over the men of war only in xviii. 5. If we leave out chapter xvi., all these difficulties disappear, and the thread of the Samuel and Saul narrative is not broken. It seems probable that xvi. 1-13 comes from the editor who compiled the Books of Samuel from earlier books about Samuel and Saul and David. Here he, eager to glorify the greatest of Israel's kings, tells us that David, too (as well as Saul), is anointed beforehand by Samuel, at the command of Jahweh. The section xvi. 14-23 belongs to an early history of David, from which a great deal of what is told us about him in the Books of Samuel is taken. We shall come across this David book in subsequent lessons.

III. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. We find in xvi. 4 a little suggestion of a side of Samuel's character not always remembered. They came to him "trembling." It is evident from xv. 33b that ferocity of temper was not incompatible with zeal for "Jahweh of war hosts."

2. The improbability of the story of this section is evident. How was it possible for Samuel, virtually the supreme authority in the nation, to come and anoint David "in the midst of his brethren" without its being known? Apart altogether from the fact that kings are not made in this way, this difficulty seems insuperable.

3. An evil spirit "*from Jahweh*" troubled Saul (xvi. 14). It is the cause of his attempt to murder David in xviii. 10. Yet

such a thought of his God does not seem to trouble the writer. It is on a par with Jahweh's hardening Pharaoh's heart, that he might punish him.

4. Mark carefully what has been already referred to, that in xvi. 14–23 David is "a mighty man of valor" (v. 18), whom Saul "loved greatly," and made his personal body-guard (v. 21).

5. Note that the Septuagint version of xvii. 6 (R.V., note) is intelligible, which the Hebrew is not. (The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Old Testament made by seventy scholars in Alexandria about 200 B.C.)

6. The phrases "fighting with the Philistines," "going forth to the fight," and "shouting for the battle" (xvii. 19, 20) sound strange, if we realize that for forty days nothing had been done beyond the proclamation twice a day of an unanswered challenge. It may be "magnificent, but it is not war."

7. The word translated "youth" in xvii. 33 might better be translated "boy." It is translated "lad" in 1 Sam. xx. 21, 36–41. In 1 Kings iii. 7 it is translated "child." Chrysostom speaks of David in this connection as a "little lad." Recall now what we read in xvi. 18.

8. The giant does not notice the sling. He only sees the staff of verse 40. Hence the contemptuous ejaculation of verse 43.

9. The Philistine is slain in verse 50, and then slain over again in verse 51. Elhanan slays him once more in 2 Sam. xxi. 19. The author of Chronicles six hundred years afterwards sought to get rid of this difficulty by inserting the words, "Lahmi, the brother of," before "Goliath" in his account of the matter. (1 Chron. xx. 5.) The authorized version, without any authority, follows his example in 2 Sam. xxi. 19. The Hebrew honestly and without comment records both traditions, and leaves us to choose between David and Elhanan.

10. Saul in verse 55 asks Abner, "Whose son is this lad?" Yet in xvi. 21, some time previously, the lad was a "mighty man of valor" whom Saul had "loved greatly." It seems not improbable that xvii. 15 may have been added, to help get over the difficulty. The fact that the Greek version (Septuagint) omits xvii. 12–31 and xvii. 55–xviii. 5 altogether is probably due to the same cause. The true explanation lies in the fact pointed out in section two. For two hundred years loving popular imagination had been the custodian of the details of David's life. We need not be surprised if the various versions gathered together long afterwards differ widely from one another.

IV. Questions.

1. Who killed Goliath?
2. In what way did Saul come to know David? Give both accounts.
3. Do any of the details of the graphic story of chapter xvii. strike you as improbable?
4. Could Samuel's anointing him make David a king? Compare the old belief as to episcopal ordination by the imposition of a bishop's hands.
5. Do you think it likely that David's brothers could have kept the anointing secret? or, if they had known it, would have spoken to him as Eliab does in xvii. 28?
6. Do you think God sends evil spirits into our hearts to trouble us? How was it that the writer of xvi. 14 could think so?
7. What did people mean when they said that Jahweh was with David? (1 Sam. xviii. 14.)

LESSON XXVIII.

DAVID, AND SAUL'S HATRED OF HIM.

(1 Samuel xviii.-xx., xxiv., xxxi. 1-7.)

LESSON TEXT.—"I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you."—MATT. v. 44. [R. V.]

READ CAREFULLY the prescribed chapters, noting the repetitions and discrepancies which mark off the different narratives from one another. Refer throughout to a map; and compare the account of David in the book of Chronicles.

I. OUTLINE OF THE LESSON.

1. David gradually, by deeds of prowess, wins his way in popular favour until at length Saul, stirred by jealous hatred and fear, attempts to take his life.

2. Jonathan makes a covenant of friendship with David, and tries to act as mediator between him and the king.

3. David becomes an outlaw. Saul pursues him from place to place until at last David and his devoted followers have to leave the land.

II. THE CHARACTER OF THE NARRATIVES.

The chapters before us are composed, in the main, of two separate narratives woven together. One of them is that to which the story of the slaying of Goliath by David belongs. (See Lesson XXV., § II.) The other we referred to, and called the David book, when we considered the story of Saul's first knowledge of David, and how he loved and promoted this "mighty man of valour," who was "cunning in playing." (See 1 Sam. xvi. 14–23 and Lesson XXVII., § II.) The matter recorded is what popular tradition loved to tell of David, and, as we should infer, apart altogether from its discrepancies, is not without considerable embellishment. Still there is little difficulty in tracing the general course of events which led up to the golden age of the Davidic monarchy in Jerusalem. We must remember that the Books of Samuel were not compiled until the exile (*circ.* 550 B.C.), and that the earliest narrative the compiler uses was probably not written until at least a century after the events it describes.

III. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. In xviii. 3, 4, Jonathan makes a "covenant" of friendship with David. In xx. 11–23, 42, and in xxiii. 16–18, we have other narratives of the solemn ratification of this bond. We might infer that these accounts refer to separate vows, interchanged at different places and times; but it seems more probable that the tradition of the brotherhood of David and Jonathan was current in various forms.

2. The first translation of the Old Testament, made at Alexandria between 300 and 200 B.C., and called the Septuagint, often varies greatly from the Hebrew version which has come down

to us. This is specially marked in the chapter before us (1 Sam. xviii.). In addition to a large number of minor differences, verses 17–19, 21b, 26c, 29, 30, are omitted in the Greek version. Probably even as late as the time when the Greek translation was made, the Book of Samuel was current in more than one Hebrew version.

3. The women's refrain in xviii. 7 does not seem to refer to the slaughter of the Philistine at all (see R. V. marg. to verse 6), and agrees better with the story in xvi. 14–23, where David is a noted man of war.

4. In xviii. 10, 11, and in xix. 10, we have two versions of Saul's casting his spear at David. Can xx. 33, where he casts it at Jonathan, be another version of the same event? xviii. 17 does not seem easily consistent with xviii. 10, 11.

5. David's reply in xviii. 23 reads curiously from one who had been already betrothed to the eldest daughter of the king, (xviii. 17–19).

6. In xviii. 21b Saul speaks to David about Michal, and yet in verse 22 he bids his servants approach him secretly on the point. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why 21b is omitted in the Septuagint. In 2 Sam. xxi. 8, Michal, not, as here, Merab, marries Adriel.

7. Jonathan in xix. 1 is fully aware of Saul's evil intentions toward David: in xix. 8–24 Saul sends messengers, and finally goes himself to capture David; and yet in xx. 2 Jonathan is surprised when David informs him, apparently for the first time, of Saul's evil intentions.

8. The origin of the saying, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" is given us on two separate occasions, here at Ramah (xix. 24), and formerly, under different circumstances, at Gibeah (x. 11).

9. There were household gods (teraphim) in David's house (xix. 13–16). (See Lesson XI., § II., § 1.)

10. Saul, who in chapter xix. is seeking to slay David, and drives him from court in fear of his life, is surprised in xx. 27 not to find him in his usual place at the royal feast.

11. The story of David's sparing Saul's life in chapter xxiv. is so closely parallel to that in chapter xxvi. that it has been conjectured that they are separate traditions of one event. A close comparison brings out many very striking resemblances.

12. Compare the story of Saul's suicide in 1 Sam. xxxi. 4–6 with that of his death in 2 Sam. i. 6–10.

IV. Questions.

1. How do discrepancies like those just mentioned arise?
2. Were there different versions of the Old Testament?
3. How long after David's time were the Books of Samuel compiled?
4. Can you understand how different stories of the same event come into common circulation? Was that vastly more easy in days when there were no books than it is now?
5. Could a sincere Jahweh worshipper in David's time still believe in "teraphim"? What were they?
6. What do you think of Jonathan's attitude toward his rival for the throne?
7. What were some of Saul's good points?
8. Why did men love David? 1 Sam. xviii. 16.
9. What incident in David's life illustrates the lesson text? What do you think of his conduct?

LESSON XXIX.

DAVID, THE KING.

(2 Samuel v. 1–12, vi., viii., xii. 15–23.)

Lesson Text.— "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even forever." — Psalm cxxv. 2.

Read the passages prescribed. Compare carefully with the parallel narrative in 1 Chron. xi.–xvi.

I. Outline of Lesson.

1. After Saul's death David becomes king of Judah in Hebron, and, after the murder of Ishbaal, king over Judah and Israel in Jerusalem.
2. David and his warriors bring the sacred ark of Jahweh of war hosts to Jerusalem.
3. David's sorrow at the death of his child.

II. The David Story in Samuel and Chronicles.

The story in Samuel, though, as we have seen, formed of narratives which often differ from one another in detail, gives us, as a whole, a vivid picture of David and his age. We see how the outlaw, already a popular favorite, gathering to him a band of men brave as himself, manages, step by step, to win his way to supremacy. "There was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David" (2 Sam. iii. 1); but David, backed by his doughty followers, at length, partly by prowess, partly by treachery and the knife of the assassin, wins his way to the throne. He captures the fortress of Jebus, lying between Israel and Judah, but belonging to neither, and at length unites north and south into one kingdom. The ark, which brought Jahweh's help in battle, is carried triumphantly to the new capital. With the free yeomen of Israel behind him, David crushes the Philistines and extends and unites his empire. He is beloved of Israel and Judah alike, and is, for his times, a model king; a man who, to his own day, was one "after Jahweh's own heart" (1 Sam. xiii. 14). The account given in Chronicles is wholly different in tone. It looks at the age of David from the standpoint of the priest of the second temple. The wild warrior has almost disappeared. We have a devout, ordinance-loving monarch, surrounded by priests and Levites, conforming to ideals and usages which did not come into being till the exile. The David of Samuel is historical. The David of Chronicles is an anachronism. The real David lived and moved in the times and amid the religious usages with which our study has made us familiar. The chronicler, re-editing Samuel from a post-exilic standpoint, imbues David, as far as possible, with a spirit and throws about him an atmosphere which belongs only to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. The Jews, who arranged the books of the Bible largely according to their value, rank Samuel second only to "the Law," that most sacred of all sacred writings.

Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, on the other hand, come at the very end of the canon, in a position of less importance even than the Song of Songs and Esther, which, in the strict sense, were not holy scripture at all. (References to the Chronicles version will be found in the margin of the R. V.)

III. Some Noteworthy Points.

1. David takes the fortress of Jebus apparently for the first time (v. 6–8). The Deuteronomic writer in Joshua xii. 10 appears to attribute its capture to Joshua. In Judges i. 8 it is not taken till after Joshua's death, and in Judges i. 21 the Jebusites dwell in it "unto this day." There is no doubt that the version which atttributes its capture to David is the true one. His making it his capital was a master stroke. Thereby he escaped exciting the jealousy of either north or south, and was indebted only to himself for his headquarters, in the "city of David."

2. The Eliada of v. 16 is, as we have seen, a pious alteration from Beeliada (Baal knows). Later times could not think of David as giving any such name to one of his sons. (*Cf.* 1 Chron. xiv. 7 and Lesson XXI., § IV., §§ 5 and 6.)

3. Mark v. 24 as a note of David's thought of Jahweh. He shews his presence in the rustling of the tree-tops.

4. The account of the ark in chapter vi. tallies exactly with what we have already learned of the nature of the ark in early Israel. (Refer to Lesson XVII., § III, § 3.) In David's time "priests and Levites" were unknown. The explanation of 2 Sam. vi. 6, 7, is replaced in Chronicles by 1 Chron. xv. 13.

5. In vi. 13 David offers sacrifice. This was a sacrilegious act according to the priestly standard of later days. In 1 Chron. xv. 26, 27, accordingly, *the Levites* offer the sacrifice. Michal's indignant reproach too, is omitted. She despises him only "in her heart."

6. Chapter viii. probably comes from the hand of the writer in the Babylonian exile who compiled the Books of Samuel. He uses data, however, as to David's conquests which appear to be trustworthy. The conclusion of verse 18 (R. V.) reads like part of an early account. The Hebrew word used, *kohen*, is the regular term for priest.

7. The little story in xii. 15–23 comes from a very early account of David (2 Sam. ix.–xx.). Its pathos and beauty must appeal to all of us, and shows us the deeper and tenderer side of David's character.

IV. Questions.

1. Did the Jews who arranged the order of the books in the canon attach as much importance to Samuel as to Chronicles?
2. What are the main differences between the account of the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem which Chronicles gives and that given in Samuel?
3. When and from what standpoint were the Books of Chronicles written?
4. Where was the fortress of Jebus? Why was David's making it his capital an important strategic move?
5. Describe religious thought and usage in the time of David. Contrast it with that after the exile
6. Discuss David's character in relation to his times. Contrast 2 Sam. xii. 15-23 with xii 29-31.
7. How far do you think 1 Sam. xiii. 14 is true?

LESSON XXX.

DAVID AND ABSALOM.

(2 Samuel xiii., 23–29, xv.–xviii.)

LESSON TEXT.—"A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother."—PROV. x. 1.

READ xiii. 23–29, xv., xviii., marking the vivid character of the narrative, and its richness in detail and local colour. Refer throughout to a map.

I. LESSON SUMMARY.

David banishes Absalom for the murder of Amnon, but after three years permits him, at Joab's instigation, to return to Jerusalem, and two years later is reconciled to him. Absalom, however, plots against his father, and in underhand ways "steals away the hearts of the men of Israel." When matters are ripe, he raises the standard of revolt in Hebron; and David has to leave Jerusalem as a fugitive. He is saved by the intrigue of Hushai, who had remained in the city; and not long afterward, when David's three generals take the field against the usurper, Absalom, caught by his hair on the branches of a tree, is, counter to David's express command, slain by Joab. David, notwithstanding his son's ingratitude, is broken-hearted at his death. The revolt quelled, David returns to Jerusalem as king.

II. SOURCE OF THE LESSON.

These chapters are taken from one of the earliest historical sources in the Old Testament. Not very long after David's time, near enough to it, at any rate, for details to be still fresh in men's memories, this story of the king was written, possibly in Jerusalem. We have apparently lost part of it, here and there it bears marks of later additions, but what the compiler has preserved to us (namely, 2 Sam. v. 3–16, vi. 1–23, ix.–xx.; 1 Kings i., ii.) is a unique picture of the times. It bears in every verse marks of accuracy, and sets the intrigues of David's court before us with almost photographic fidelity. The writer has considerable power of portraiture. The wily Jonadab; Ahithophel, the royal counsellor; Joab, the overweening; David himself, a strange complex of weakness and strength, sternness and an almost foolish tenderness,—live before us. The story of Chronicles is a dead catalogue when we compare it with this fresh account of the time of the monarchy. Note that the Book of Chronicles passes all this matter by in silence. The actual David of these chapters was too entirely alien from the David of post-exilic dreams for this portrait to find entrance into the precise and decorous record of the chronicler of the restored Jerusalem.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED.

1. The method of the assassin was too well known to call for comment. Amnon is invited to a feast, and there, under his

brother's roof and in spite of the rights of hospitality, is, while half intoxicated, foully murdered by servants (xiii. 23–29).

2. The picture of Absalom's attitude toward the citizens has its parallel among politicians of more recent times (xv. 1–6).

3. The Septuagint has preserved to us the correct version of xv. 7. Forty is absurd. (See R. V., marg.)

4. Hebron was sacred to Abraham's memory. Absalom might well have vowed to sacrifice to Jahweh at that ancient sanctuary under the sacred oak of Mamre. But Hebron was also the ancient capital of Judah which the men of Judah had not willingly seen superseded by Jerusalem. To raise his standard as king in Hebron would help to win to Absalom the loyal burghers of the south (xv. 9).

5. Absalom offers sacrifice, presumably in person, in Hebron, one of the high places. The legislation which made this illegal evidently belongs to a later time (xv. 12).

6. In xv. 17 neither A. V. nor R. V. makes good sense. The R. V. marg. suggests that they tarried at the very outskirts of the city, by the last house.

7. Note David's power of inspiring personal loyalty. xviii. 3 shows us this. It is still more clear from xxiii. 13–17.

8. The statement in xviii. 15 seems unnecessary. Surely, three spears through Absalom's heart were enough. The verse may be a later insertion.

9. Verse 18 seems also to break the narrative. Moreover, it contradicts xiv. 27.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Contrast the characters of Joab and David. A comparison between the late Emperor William of Germany and his chancellor, Bismarck, is suggestive. Note how the stronger temper controls the weaker. The early verses of chapter xix. do but suggest what seems to be the key to the relationship as a whole.

2. Contrast, too, this picture of David in his later days with David before he became king. Does he not show better in adversity than in prosperity? Success often brings worse temptations than failure.

V. Questions.

1. Does this picture of life at David's court appear to you to be reliable? If so, why?
2. Can you conjecture why the Book of Chronicles passes it over in silence?
3. Was Joab or David the better man?
4. Can you give instances of the personal loyalty of his followers to David?
5. At what moment of his history does David seem greatest to you?
6. David was brought up as a shepherd, the son of a commoner. Absalom and Solomon were trained at court. Trace the result.
7. How far was David responsible for Absalom's conduct?

Note. — Readers who are not familiar with German will find a summary of Kautzsch's analysis of Samuel in Cheyne's "Aids to the Devout Study of Criticism," ch. i.

LESSON XXXI.

THE CROWNING OF SOLOMON.

(1 Kings i. 5–53, iii. 4–15, v.–vii.)

LESSON TEXT.—"Give thy servant an understanding heart."—1 KINGS iii. 9.

READ the passages named. Mark carefully the circumstances of Solomon's accession. A comparison with Chronicles is interesting (1 Chron. xxix.; 2 Chron. i–iv.).

I. OUTLINE OF THE LESSON.

1. Solomon, by Bathsheba's intrigue, and with the help of the foreign mercenaries of the king's body-guard, is made king in place of Adonijah, David's lawful successor. To make his throne secure, Solomon causes Adonijah and Joab to be put to death (i. 5–53; ii. 25, 34).

2. Solomon goes to sacrifice at the great high place at Gibeon. There he requests of Jahweh that he may be enabled to discern between good and evil (iii. 4–15).

3. With the help of Hiram, king of Tyre, he builds the temple, and adjoining it his own palace (v.–vii.).

II. SOURCES OF THESE NARRATIVES.

1. 1 Kings i. and ii. (with the exception of ii. 1–12) belongs to the early graphic story of David, of which we spoke in last lesson. It gives us a most reliable and clear account of Solomon's accession.

2. The account of Solomon's dream (iii. 4–15) is a narrative fragment which is certainly earlier than Deuteronomy, but by no means of such historical value as chapters i. and ii.

3. The account of the building of the temple possibly has as a substratum certain reliable data, but the whole (chapters v.–vii.) has been edited and re-edited, and is, as a comparison with the Septuagint fully shows, in a state of great disorder. Tradition has undoubtedly lent to it a glory greater than the actual building warrants. Some of the figures, at any rate (*e.g.*, in v. 15), are absurdly large.

III. DAVID AND SOLOMON.

When we come to analyze the account of Solomon's reign, we are compelled greatly to modify the verdict to which a cursory reading of the accounts leads us. David's reign was a culmination point. He was a monarch who brought about national unity, and extended his realm on every side without offending the freedom-loving spirit of his subjects. His wars were Jahweh's wars, and the services he rendered to the nation greater than the demands he made of it. Solomon became a tyrant. He dreamed dreams of a brilliant Oriental despotism. His costly buildings and forced levies burdened and alienated his people. He became king not by popular choice, but by the aid of foreign mercenaries. His reign prepared the way for the division of the kingdom on his decease. We have no detailed record of his reign, such as we have of David's; and the scattered notes of early fragments which have survived amid the laudatory notices of later days show that underneath a brilliant exterior disintegrating forces were at work. David was a national ruler whom the people of Jahweh loved.

Solomon forgot the interests of the people of Jahweh, and had lost their simple and sturdy spirit. In him we trace the beginning of the decline. His building of the temple is, however, an event of the greatest importance. It led at length to the centralization of worship of which the theocratic hierarchy of the second temple is the final outcome.

IV. Noteworthy Points.

1. Adonijah offers sacrifice in person, according to the universal custom in early Israel (i. 9, 19, 25: the R. V. marg. is correct).

2. Mark the vivid picture of palace intrigue in chapter i.

3. The Cherethites and the Pelethites in i. 38 were David's devoted *foreign* body-guard. They came probably from Philistia, and were mercenary troops.

4. Contrast Solomon's promise in i. 52 with his action in ii. 24.

5. The murder of Joab ii. 28–34 is an ignoble end to a valiant though cruel life.

6. The king sacrifices at the high place in Gibeon, without the narrator's being conscious of its being anything unlawful or uncommon. III. 2, 3, are an insertion from a Deuteronomic standpoint. See the explanation which Chronicles offers (2 Chron. i. 3). A Deuteronomic editor has inserted 1 Kings iii. 14.

7. The numbers in v. 15 are absurd, even if we have regard to the explanation in 2 Chron. ii. 17. Compare verse 13.

8. The Septuagint places vi. 37–38 where vi. 1 stands in the Hebrew text, and removes vii. 1–12 to the end of chapter vii.

9. Note that Solomon's palace seems to have been within the great court of the temple (vi. 36; vii. 8, 9).

10. Deuteronomy xvii. 14–20 is an interesting later criticism of Solomon.

11. It has been supposed that Solomon's temple was built after the pattern of the tabernacle. Not only does the narrative not bear this out, but the whole evidence goes to prove that the tabernacle, as P describes it in Exodus, was the creation of the reverent imagination of the exile. It was a development of the Solomonic temple, which was to serve as a detailed suggestion for the temple of the returning exiles.

V. Questions.

1. Compare David and Solomon.
2. What do you think of the way in which Solomon attained the throne and of his subsequent treatment of Joab, Adonijah, and Abiathar?
3. Do you think Solomon was justified in taxing his subjects for the splendour of his court, and in exacting forced labour? Can anything justify the existence of a monarchy?
4. Are all parts of the Book of Kings of equal historical value? Explain your answer.
5. Is Solomon's request at Gibeon an index to his character?
6. Could Solomon have honoured Jahweh better than by building the temple?

Note.—The paragraphs on David and Solomon in the "Israel" article in the Encyclopædia Britannica are very clear, and will be found helpful. Remember that Solomon's date is *circ.* 1000 B.C., and that of Deuteronomy 621. The later law book was introduced in 444.

LESSON XXXII.

SOLOMON'S JUDGMENT.

(1 Kings, chapters iii. 16–28, x. 1–13.)

LESSON TEXT.— "The wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, . . . full of mercy and good fruits."— JAMES iii. 17.

READ 1 Kings iv. 29–34, and the passages named. Refer to the opening chapters of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

I. THE NARRATIVES.

1. Two women appear before Solomon, each claiming to be the mother of an infant they bring with them. Solomon orders the infant to be cut into two parts, and half given to each. He thus discovers, from her horror at the suggestion, the true mother of the child (iii. 16–28).

2. The queen of Sheba, hearing of Solomon's wisdom and the splendour of his court, pays him a visit, makes proof of his wisdom, and gives praise to Jahweh for all the glory she has seen. After giving and receiving magnificent presents, she and her gorgeous retinue return home (x. 1–13).

II. THE CHARACTER OF THESE STORIES.

Both stories belong to the tradition about Solomon which had forgotten the Solomon of history, and put in his place the pious, wise, rich, and mighty king, to whose time men looked back with longing in the exile. It is, of course, quite possible that some historic kernel may underlie at any rate the first of the stories, though even there a careful reading inclines one to the opinion that it is merely a later tradition. The Jews of the early centuries were fond of discussing the possible nature of Solomon's intercourse with the wise queen, and the legend grew, as it spread, to curious proportions. In South Arabia the Jews identified her with the Arabian queen Bilkis, and married her to Solomon. She has also been identified in the legends with an early Abyssinian queen called Makeda, from whom the only legitimate Abyssinian dynasty still claims descent. They relate also the ignoble stratagem by which Solomon gained Makeda as his wife.

III. SOLOMON'S WISDOM.

Wisdom, in the early days of Israel, meant little more than astuteness and cunning. Possibly Solomon may have had a reputation for wisdom of this sort, which afforded a pretext for the later elaborations which attribute to him supremacy in every department of knowledge. The little section in 1 Kings iv. 29–34, which dates from after the exile, shows us that in that day the thought of Solomon's wisdom had reached alarming proportions. The tradition grew still more. The later Jews inferred from iv. 33 that Solomon understood the language of every kind of animal, and among the Moslems to-day he is described as having

control over the angels of the earth and sky and sea. The famous carpet on which he and his troops were transported through the air is well known. In our Bible the Book of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs, although of very different character, are all attributed to him. The Book of Wisdom, which was written in Alexandria, and is not included in the Hebrew canon, is put in his mouth, and ascribes to him, among other things, a complete knowledge of natural science. In the time of Pompey, moreover, we find "the Psalms of Solomon." All this shews how later days loved to glorify the person of the king who built the temple, and to make him pre-eminent in every department of life. The account of him in the Book of Kings shews us the beginning of the process.

IV. Solomon and the Book of Proverbs.

The earliest part of the Book of Proverbs was not put together till long after Solomon's day, so that even that collection cannot be by him. Moreover, when we read proverbs in praise of monogamy and in disparagement of wealth, and compare them with those which refer to the king, we see at once that such sayings cannot well come from the monarch of unbounded wealth and an elaborate Oriental harem. It is quite possible, however, that certain aphorisms of Solomon may be included in the collection. The little group of eight distinct parts which form our present Book of Proverbs dates in its complete form from long after the exile.

V. The Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes.

1. The Song of Solomon appears to be a little drama on the theme, "Love is stronger than all." The action of the play shews how a peasant maiden disdains all the attractions of the court, and prefers to return to her simple life in the north country. Its developed literary form and its language, as well as the subject matter, preclude Solomon's authorship.

2. The language of Ecclesiastes is full of Aramaic forms which were not current till about the year 200 B.C. Its attribution to Solomon only shews how carelessly tradition works.

VI. Questions.

1. Was Solomon a good king?
2. What was the only important event of his reign?
3. Why did later days love to tell stories of his wisdom and glory? Were they true?
4. What books have been attributed to him?
5. Can any of them be his? Give your reasons.
6. Was David a greater and wiser king than Solomon?
7. Wherein does real greatness consist?
8. Later times blamed Solomon for worshipping strange gods. Does that seem of any moment when we compare it with his neglect of his people's welfare?
9. Was Solomon really wise? What does our lesson text say about true wisdom?

LESSON XXXIII.

ELIJAH FED BY RAVENS.

(1 Kings, chapter xvii.)

LESSON TEXT. — "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." — MATT. vi. 33.

READ CAREFULLY the chapter prescribed, and refer to Luke xiii. 1–5 for the teaching of Jesus concerning retribution.

I. THE NARRATIVE.

Elijah appears to Ahab, and foretells a great drought. At the command of Jahweh, Elijah then hides himself by the brook Cherith, where ravens bring him food morning and night. When the brook dries, he goes to the land of Tyre and Sidon, and lives with a widow woman whom Jahweh had commanded to sustain him. He causes the widow's oil and meal to increase miraculously, so that food does not fail, and, when her son dies, restores him to life.

II. CHARACTER OF THE ELIJAH STORIES.

The compiler of the Book of Kings incorporates with his work a collection of stories about Elijah which had gradually arisen as people told of the great struggle between the sterner worship of Jahweh and the popular but more or less licentious Baal worship. The latter was not always clearly distinguished from Jahweh worship, but at length was seen by the nobler spirits of the time to be incompatible with it. The struggle against Baalism centred round the name of Elijah, who was at the head of the movement, and a later time loved to magnify his exploits, and attributed to him all manner of miraculous power. We must remember that we are considering popular legend rather than history, and that, while the struggle of the prophetic, or Jahweh party against the prevalent Baal-worship is certainly historical, the form in which these tales present it to us is legendary. The kingdom split in two at Solomon's death; and the scene of these stories is laid in Israel, the northern kingdom, under the dynasty of Omri.

III. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. The way in which Elijah suddenly appears on the scene in verse 1 suggests that the compiler may have omitted the earlier portion of the Elijah narratives which he incorporates. The following points also support some such conclusion. No place is named, so that the "hence" of verse 3 reads strangely. In xviii. 10 and 13 we have references to events of which we have no record, and xviii. 17 seems to imply some earlier stories of Ahab and Elijah.

2. Mark the reading of the Septuagint (lxx.) translation of Kings.

3. The location of the "brook Cherith" is unknown. Only conjecture has placed it on the map.

4. Zarephath is in the land of the Sidonians, and lies accordingly in Baal's land. Nevertheless, the narrative gives Jahweh power to command the widow, presumably a Sidonian, to sustain Elijah.

5. In verse 10 the woman is gathering broken pieces of wood in the market-place by the gate of the city.

6. The Septuagint makes the woman speak of her "children" in verse 12. These slight variations show us that even as late as 200 B.C. the Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible differed from one another. The variations are often, as we saw in the stories about David, very considerable.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Note how the thought of God has outgrown these early times. Pestilence, famine, drought, were looked upon as marks of God's anger, the result of idolatry or the neglect of sacrifice. This idea dominates the greater part of the Bible. The good man is saved from such things. The ungodly are afflicted by them. (See, *e.g.*, Psalms i., xci. 5–8, Isaiah xxxiii. 15, 16.) Health and prosperity are the result of goodness. Calamity and misfortune of all kinds are marks of divine retribution. During and after the exile the Babylonian Isaiah and the unknown author of the Book of Job unhesitatingly declare that this is not so. Jesus, in Matt. v. 45 and Luke xiii. 1–5, likewise presents this true thought of God. Moral degradation, not lack of worldly prosperity, is the result of moral wrong. When Jerusalem fell, in 586 B.C., men had not yet learned this.

2. We have come to regard God's power in nature as working with perfect regularity, so that we can trust in the order of the universe. The thought of our story regards him as altering that order in favour of certain privileged persons, like Elijah. This kind of supernaturalism is universal in the thought of early times.

3. Dwell on the reasons why the worship of Jahweh was really better than that of Baal. Jahweh worship made for righteousness. Baal worship was a glorification of nature-powers, and lacked moral fibre. The self-control which leads man to sovereign power was lacking.

V. Questions.

1. Are these stories about Elijah true?
2. Do you know of any other stories like them?
3. Does God withhold rain because of idolatry?
4. What was good in the rebellion against Baal worship?
5. How did Jesus test the value of a man's religion? (Matt. vii. 16, 21.
6. What do you know about the thought and life in the time of Elijah? Compare it with the conditions of our own time. Will our so doing help us to think more highly of Elijah?

LESSON XXXIV.

ELIJAH AND THE PRIESTS OF BAAL.

(1 Kings, chapter xviii.)

LESSON TEXT. — "Let it be known this day that thou art God." — 1 KINGS xviii. 36.

READ the chapter prescribed. Look out Mount Carmel and Jezreel on the map. What was the distance between them?

I. THE STORY.

In the third year of the great drought, Jahweh instructs Elijah to meet king Ahab, and command him to summon the 400 priests of Baal from the queen's sanctuary to meet him on Mount Carmel. Obadiah, a follower of Jahweh, who was over Ahab's household, summons Ahab to meet Elijah; and Ahab, at the Tishbite's orders, summons Israel and the priests of Baal to put Baal and Jahweh to the proof. The Baal priests make ready a sacrifice; but, in spite of all their entreaties, the god gives no sign. Elijah then prepares his sacrifice, drenches it with water that the portent may be all the more marvellous, and calls upon Jahweh. At his prayer fire descends from heaven, consumes the sacrifice, and even licks up the water in the trench round the altar. Elijah then slays the 400 priests of Baal, and warns the king to flee to Jezreel before the coming storm of rain. In the excitement of the great victory Elijah outruns the chariot of the king.

II. THE HISTORICAL BASIS UNDERLYING THE NARRATIVE.

Beneath this elaborately graphic tradition lies the fact of the movement by which the prophetic party, for which Elijah stands, rescued the worship of Jahweh from absorption in the nature worship of the Canaanities. That victory was only slowly won. Nevertheless, through the efforts of the prophetic party, who saw most clearly the issues at stake, and in opposition to the influence of the courtly party and the populace at large, won it was. The issue at stake was whether the religion of Israel, full of the possibilities which blossomed forth in the immortal utterances of men like Amos and Isaiah, was to be merged and lost in the Canaanite nature worship, or whether, shaking itself free from that worship, and true to its best traditions, the Hebrew "genius for religion" was to attain its own proper development. The successful result, whereby Israel came to be exclusively Jahweh's people, and created for us the magnificent religious heritage of the Old Testament, is due to the prophetic movement which shines through the vivid legendary color of our story. That movement brought about the overthrow of Omri's dynasty, and prepared the way for the religious development which, through Amos and Isaiah, led up to the solemn recognition of Deuteronomy as Jahweh's law, under Josiah in 621. Our story presents this crisis in the nation's history, as popular imagination loved to picture it in later days, and attrib-

utes what was in fact a national reaction under the leadership of the choicest spirits in Israel entirely to the person and work of Elijah.

III. Noteworthy Points.

1. Obadiah, the worthy overseer of Ahab's house, meets us only in this chapter. The story of his care for the prophets of Jahweh, when Jezebel, the queen, endeavoured to destroy them, has not been preserved to us. The hint given us in verses 4 and 13 enables us to picture the moral strength of the man. He must not be confounded with the prophet Obadiah, who wrote about three hundred years later.

2. Ahab's search for Elijah in verse 10, and the activity of Elijah, to which the words "thou troubler of Israel," in verse 17, refer, probably formed a part of the original collection of Elijah narratives which we have lost. The references seem distinctly to speak of these events as forming an earlier part of the story.

3. "And the prophets of the Asherah four hundred," in verse 19 (wrongly translated grove in the A. V.) seems to be an addition to the narrative. In verses 22 and 40 only the Baal prophets are mentioned. The Asherah was a wooden pillar set up in connection with the licentious worship which reached its grossest form in Phœnicia (1 Kings xvi. 33; 2 Kings xxiii. 7, R. V.)

4. The references to the "sons of the prophets," or prophetic communities, in 1 Kings xx. 35 and 2 Kings ii. 3, 15, as well as the statement in 1 Kings xviii. 4, show us that the statement in verse 22 is dramatic, and not literal.

5. The story throws no doubt upon the existence of Baal. It only sets forth that he is not so mighty a god as Jahweh. The monotheism of later Israel has not yet been reached.

6. In verse 30 Elijah repairs the altar of Jahweh on Carmel. In verse 32 he apparently builds a new one.

7. The phrase, in verse 36, "Elijah the prophet came near" reads somewhat strangely. He has never left the scene. Perhaps "appproached Jahweh" is meant.

8. The massacre of the priests of Baal throws light on the thought of Jahweh. He is the stern God who dwells in the darkness and amid the thunder of the mountain top. Elijah partakes of his fierce, stern spirit.

9. "His servant," in verse 43, suggests some earlier reference which we have lost.

10. The great drought is historical. Menander, of Ephesus, says that it lasted a whole year, and finally ceased in answer to Ittobaal's prayer.

IV. Questions.

1. What movement did Elijah stand for in the popular imagination? What political event was its outcome?
2. What should we have lost if Israel's religion had been absorbed in that of the Canaanites?
3. What do you think of the massacre of the 400 Baal prophets?
4. May this story suggest to us the importance of the conflict between what is right and what is pleasant in our own hearts?
5. Has the power of Elijah over Ahab, as seen in verses 19 and 20, and better still in chapter xxi. any parallel in the strength which comes to us all when we know we are in the right?

LESSON XXXV.

ELIJAH AND THE CHARIOT OF FIRE.

(1 Kings, chapter xix. 19–21; 2 Kings, chapter ii. 1–15.)

Lesson Text.—"Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off."—1 Kings xx. 11.

Read the passages prescribed. Look out Beersheba, Horeb, Damascus, Gilgal (10 miles south-west of Samaria), Bethel, Jericho, on the map, so as to be able to follow the narrative.

I. The Story.

Elijah, to escape the wrath of queen Jezebel, flees to Beersheba, and then south to Horeb, the mount of God, where Jahweh renews his courage, and sends him back to dethrone Ahab and anoint Jehu king in his stead. At Jahweh's command he summons Elisha to follow him as his companion and successor (1 Kings xix.).

Some time later Elijah and Elisha go southward from Gilgal to Bethel. There and afterward at Jericho the sons of the prophets ask Elisha if he knows that Jahweh is about to take away Elijah. Elijah and Elisha (who refuses to leave him) cross the Jordan, the waters of which divide before them. A chariot of fire and horses of fire appear, and Elijah is carried up to heaven by a whirlwind. He bequeaths his mantle and miraculous power to Elisha, before whom, as he returns, the waters of Jordan divide at a stroke from the prophet's cloak. (2 Kings ii. 1–15).

II. Its Origin and Character.

1 Kings xix. belongs to the collection of Elijah stories which we considered in the last lesson. It is full of the splendid dramatic power and color of the finest national legends of Israel. Through it all we feel the personality of the great prophet before whom Ahab cowered, but who yet was "a man of like passions with us" (James v. 17).

The narrative in 2 Kings ii., on the other hand, seems to belong to the collection of Elisha stories which it introduces. Elijah is here no longer the stern, lonely prophet of the wilderness, appearing like a lightning flash, only to be gone no one knows whither. He apparently lives with Elisha at Gilgal, and is in some sense recognized as their head by the companies of prophets at Bethel and Jericho, who are fully aware of his approaching departure. Both collections are, however, similar in character, although the Elisha group is, on the whole, quieter and less fine than those which gathered round the name of his great predecessor.

III. Noteworthy Points.

1. Horeb is only some 200 miles from Beersheba, so that the forty days and nights of xix. 8 seem wholly unnecessary for the journey to a man like the Elijah of xviii. 46.

2. From xix. 15, 16, we should expect some later notice of the anointing of Hazael and Jehu. Such may have been recorded in the original, and omitted by the compiler in favor of 2 Kings viii. 13, ix. 1, 6, where Elisha appoints Hazael and Jehu.

3. Although Elijah calls Elisha to follow him, yet in chapter xxi. Elijah, as had been his wont, appears alone and unannounced. The companionship is not close in the Elijah narratives.

4. The mantle of hair and the leather girdle were the prophetic insignia. See 2 Kings i. 8 (R. V., marg.), and refer also to the picture of John the Baptist in Mark i. 6.

5. "The chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof" appears to be a title which Elisha applies to Elijah (2 Kings ii. 12). King Joash, in 2 Kings xiii. 14, applies it to Elisha in a passage where it seems far more intelligible than it does here.

6. Elijah is taken to heaven, Jahweh's dwelling-place. The same thing is recorded of Enoch (Gen. v. 24). We must remember that the Christian thought of immortality, with its accompaniment of rewards and punishment, was unknown to the Hebrews of the Old Testament. To them the life after death was merely a shadowy existence in the dim underworld where the thin ghosts peep and mutter. Their idea of the blessed life was that a man should live and prosper many days, and that, when the inevitable came, it should come painlessly. The beyond was only endurable because it was the lot of all. As late as the date of Ecclesiastes (*circ.* 200 B.C.) we read that a living dog is better than a dead lion (Eccl. ix. 4). It is interesting to compare this with the famous and touching words which Homer puts into the mouth of Achilles: I had rather live upon the earth as a poor man's slave than reign the sceptred monarch of the dead (Od. xi. 486). The ordinary interpretation of Job xix. 25 is undoubtedly erroneous.

7. The locality of Elijah's ascension is that of Moses' grave.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Note that the desire to make glorious the end of a life like Elijah's, which underlies the story of the chariot of fire, is altogether worthy. What can be finer than to have been a power for righteousness, as Elijah was in Israel? He was beyond the control of fear, incapable of corruption, causing the king to quail before his just indignation. No wonder men afterward loved to tell that he was not allowed to pass to the dim shadow world, but was carried to Jahweh's presence.

2. Consider what it means for a nation to have stories like these of Elijah and Ahab, Nathan and David (2 Sam. xii. 1–6), John the Baptist and Herod, among its traditions. Is it not well for us to store them in our memories, that they may help us to be fearless and honourable, and render us incapable of compromise with the wrong that threatens our self-respect?

V. Questions.

1. What do you consider fine in the stories of Elijah? Do you know of any other men like him?
2. What did the Hebrews think of the life after death?
3. In what ways did John the Baptist resemble Elijah?
4. What does the fact that stories like these were loved and told again and again in Israel suggest as to the national character?
5. Was Elijah more of a king than Ahab? Give reasons for your answer.

LESSON XXXVI.

ELISHA.

(2 Kings, chapters iv. 8-37, v.)

LESSON TEXT.—"Speaking the truth in love."—EPH. iv. 15.

READ the passages prescribed, and run over the stories of Elisha's miracles in 2 Kings ii., iv., vi. Find Samaria, Shunem, Damascus, and the rivers Abana and Pharpar on the map.

I. NARRATIVES OF THE LESSON.

A rich woman in Shunem prepares a chamber for Elisha, which the prophet uses when on his journeys he comes that way. In accordance with her desire the prophet promises her a son. The child dies, but is miraculously restored to life by Elisha (iv. 8–37).

Naaman, a prominent Syrian officer, is afflicted with leprosy. The king of Syria sends to the king of Israel to command that Naaman be cured. Elisha comes to his assistance, and cures Naaman, but refuses a reward. Gehazi, his servant, notwithstanding his master's refusal, subsequently asks for and receives a gift, in the name of Elisha. The prophet, as a punishment, causes the leprosy of Naaman to come upon him. (v. 1–27).

II. THE ELISHA STORIES.

These form a scattered collection of the tales which came to be told of the second great prophet of Israel. They are not connected, and cannot be pieced together into a consecutive narrative. For instance, in 2 Kings ii. 25, Elisha *returns* to Samaria while the narrative has not told us of his being there; in vi. 23 we read that the Syrians came no more against Israel, while in the very next verse it is told us that Benhadad went up and besieged Samaria. The stories themselves, moreover, lack the grandeur and splendid moral elevation of much of the Elijah narrative. They are not only quieter in tone and often lacking in moral purpose, but savour rather of the magician and sorcerer than of the prophet. Elisha shows his power in sweetening a brackish well (ii. 19, f.); in calling down bears to devour the children who made fun of his bald head (ii. 23, f.); in making an axe-head float on the water (vi. 5, f.); in counteracting poison (iv. 38, f.); in multiplying barley cakes and wheat (iv. 42, f.); a corpse which after his death is laid in his tomb miraculously comes to life on contact with his bones (xiii. 21). Most of these are mere marvels, told only because they are unnatural wonders. We must class them with the similar tales which are narrated of the great men of myth and legend among other peoples. Three of the stories told of Elisha correspond to three of the Elijah stories. Each prophet divides the Jordan (ii. 8, 14); each restores a child to life under closely similar circumstances (1 Kings xvii. 17, f.; 2 Kings iv. 32, f.); each miraculously increases in her time of need a widow's supply of oil (1 Kings xvii. 14, f.; 2 Kings iv. 1, f.). The stories of our lesson are probably

the two finest which are told of Elisha. They are dramatic in style, and full of life and graphic power. Neither seems historically probable, and their interest lies in their showing us the thought of the days in which they arose.

III. Noteworthy Points.

1. Mark the simple, vivid power of the narratives. Touches like those in iv. 18–20, v. 20–22, point to the fine, unconscious power of life-like narration of an art which has no art to conceal. Such stories are not the product of reflection.

2. It is perhaps worth noting that Gehazi appears upon the scene without our having been told how he became the servant of Elisha (iv. 12).

3. Jahweh can only be worshipped upon the sacred soil of Palestine. That is why Naaman asks for some of the sacred earth (v. 17). The holy loch on the west coast of Scotland is so called because a ship carrying earth from Palestine on which to build a Roman Catholic church was wrecked there. Thus do traces of outgrown beliefs linger on.

4. A talent of silver was equivalent to about $1,000 (v. 22).

5. What is fine about the picture of Elisha is that, underlying much of what is recorded of him is the spirit of kindly beneficence, which, after all, is the essential matter in religion. Jesus "went about doing good." Paul says, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. viii. 9).

IV. Lesson Hints.

An allegorical construction of the story of Naaman may give us one or two points.

1. Naaman, a mighty man of valour, was a leper. Men great in many points have the fineness of their character destroyed by some hidden moral taint. No outward greatness can compensate for it.

2. Go, wash in the nearest river. The way of moral health is in using the common opportunities which lie at our very doors. Many of us are ready enough to do our duty in that sphere of life to which God has not been pleased to call us. "Do the work that's nearest" is Carlyle's advice, as well as Kingsley's.

3. Covetousness and deceit like Gehazi's invariably create the unseen leprosy of moral corruption.

V. Questions.

1. Contrast Elijah and Elisha. Were they men of the same spirit and temper?
2. What do you think about these wonder-stories? Did the people of early days believe in them? Why do we not?
3. Are the ways of God less wonderful because they do not appear to run counter to the orderly sway of divine law?
4. What do you think of Gehazi?
5. What is moral leprosy? What causes it? How is it to be cured?

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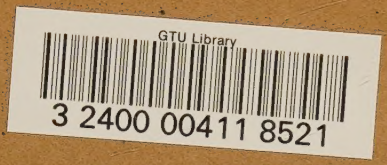

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